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COURTSHIP AND WEDLOCK;

OR,

LOVERS AND HUSBANDS.

INTRODUCTION.

LOVERS and Husbands!—The worshippers and the worshipped!—The slaves and the masters!—The humble and the mighty! What a theme of intense and boundless interest for the whole female world! For who, while triumphing in the patient devotion of the lover, does not feel some misgivings as to how it may be, when it is her turn to watch, to wait, to endure, to “love, honour, and obey!” And who, however happy in her choice, however fair her portion of domestic bliss, however easy her yoke, however light her burden, does not look back with a wild and deep regret, to those bright days, when the kind and careful, but matter-of-fact, calculating, and, alas! fault-finding husband, was the adoring, the sanguine, the all-admiring lover?

In vain, in vain. It is, alas! quite certain, and it is proved every day by the experience of thousands, that the intimacy of domestic life, which frequently increases the warm and romantic devotion of the female heart, has a most refrigerating and disenchanting effect on the—yes! we must say it (doubt it who will)—the less sublime affection of man!

A great writer has said, treating of this very subject, that “custom comes with its inevitable curse;” and many men seem rather to pride themselves on the readiness with which they cease to adore any object, be

familiar to their senses—yea, and to despise what they consider a sort of spaniel attribute of woman—the power of loving on, and often more and more fondly, in spite of weaknesses revealed, faults discovered, unkindnesses, and even cruelties endured!

But, that it is truly noble or great, to be able to love, only as long as novelty lasts, as the senses are unsated, and the eye unfamiliar with the charm, we must most positively deny; *that* surely is the loftiest power of fancy, which can invest with a thousand subtle associations and ideal charms—

“The primrose by the river’s brim,”

The every-day companion, the fire-side friend!—*that* is the noblest imagination which can discover some new charm in the most familiar face!—some new music in the most familiar voice, some new virtue in the most closely studied and best known character!—**ALL CONSTANCY IS STRENGTH!** All inconstancy—hear it, ye scoffers who pride yourselves on what you fancy is a delicate *epicureanism* of taste, and a poetical love of variety and of change,—**ALL INCONSTANCY IS WEAKNESS!** The clinging devotion you are haughtily pleased to recognise in woman, even while you affect to despise it, does not always arise from blindness to your faults, grovelling passion for your persons, or the weak reliance of the parasite plant, that clings to the noble tree it adorns and destroys. No! you are often loved (little as you deem it) because you need so much the comfort, the *protection*, the watchful tenderness of woman’s love! Because, however gifted, lofty, and independent may seem the man she loves, woman knows and feels that the world *will* forsake, its objects disappoint, man rival and betray; and that *he*, the mighty and the scornful, has nothing *real* to depend upon but woman’s love—nothing *firm* to cling to but woman’s constancy—nothing of certain shelter but woman’s bosom!

Yes! in woman’s love (even for the loftiest) there is a tender, a provident, a protecting anxiety, partaking of the nature of maternity; and often the glorious attributes with which she perseveres in investing some false idol, are a proof, not of his greatness or glory, but of the lofti-

ness of her own imagination and the purity of her own heart!

Again, her readiness to forgive cannot be a proof of weakness, since the more she forgives, the more she copies the All Powerful, the All Wise, the All Good!

It is a very low, mundane, and corsair pride, the pride in vengeance and in the Satanic incapability of forgiving!

There is nothing so sublime as a prompt and entire forgiveness. The *great* Johnson never seems so *small* as a moralist, as when he talks of delighting in a "good hater;" and every true Christian heart responds to the poet's exclamation—

"To err is human, to forgive divine."

Man need not then glory so much, that, neither as an individual nor as a race, he can ever forgive a frailty, or take a penitent to his bosom! nor need woman be ashamed to own, that however wronged, neglected, or outraged, her heart is ever prone to forgive!

However, this we must own, that the same woman who is extreme to mark what is done amiss by a lover, is often ready and eager to put the most favourable construction on all that emanates from a husband—and in this she is surely wise. *One* must yield, *one* must obey, *one* must follow; and when once the wife has sensibly made up her mind to be that one—and where she cannot do so, she has not only erred, but perjured herself—she cannot do better than *cultivate* a habit of faith and reliance on him whom *she has chosen*, knowing that both the laws of God and man had appointed him as her guide, her comforter, her protector.

But with the lover there is no such duty. Woman cannot be too cautious, too watchful, too exacting in her choice of a lover, who, from the slave of a few weeks or months—rarely years—is to become the *master* of her future destiny, and the guide, not only through all time, but perhaps eternity!

What madness then to suffer the heart to be taken captive by beauty, talent, grace, fascination, before the reason is convinced of the soundness of principle, the purity of faith, the integrity of mind of the future husband.

It is not always the all-enduring, devoted, and impassioned lover who makes the kindest, the most attentive and forbearing husband.

We have often seen the coldest inattention, the most mortifying disparagement, the most insulting inconstancy, follow, even in the first months of matrimony, on the most romantic devotion and blindest adoration of courtship. The honeymoon seems to exhaust every drop of honey, and leave nothing but stings in the jar.

Again, the lover who dares to be a MAN, and to "hint a fault, and hesitate dislike," even though the happiness of his whole life *seems* to him at stake,—one who may forget a *bouquet*, or neglect a compliment, arrive a few minutes too late, or be disinclined for a waltz or a polka, not admire a fashion, or disagree with a sentiment,—such a lover, despicable and indifferent as he is pronounced to be by astounded mammas and indignant aunts (jealous for their daughters and nieces as for themselves),—and far as he falls short of romantic sisters' and young friends' exacting notions,—may turn out the best of good husbands after all!

If he dared to be a man when he had everything to gain, he will not be a coward when he has, in the world's opinion, nothing to lose.

We say the world—because, in our own estimation, every married pair, even after the indissoluble knot is tied, have still much to lose, if they risk one iota of the trust, the confidence, and the tenderness of those whose mere freedom they have enchained for life.

The tale, then, to which we have given the title of "COURTSHIP AND WEDLOCK," and which treats, of course, of varieties of both species, and of woman as the "wooed and the won" in courtship and in wedlock, will, we hope, be found to contain both precept and practice, example and warning.

If any should find a few hints for converting a devoted lover into a kind and constant husband, and for retaining in the love of that husband something of the ardent attention of the lover, we have not written, nor have they read, in vain.

Although our French neighbours are wisely afraid of being cleverly call *excès de prévenances*, and although

there is no doubt that, however well meant, a tactless exuberance of affection, and a lavish and indiscriminate use of *les petits soins*, is wearying, irritating, and disenchanting to that petulant, spoilt creature, man! yet, in the married state, kindness, warm, watchful, and sincere, should be every wife's rule of action; and though some moralists tell her to oppose strength with cunning, never to own a fault, or to disclose more than is perfectly convenient to her; yet would we advocate candour and perfect truth as the only real safeguards in the long run. "Kindness and candour!"—these should be the motto of married life, for man and woman too.

How seldom they are such, let thousands of wedded pairs blush to own, and trace to that deficiency the greatest and most complicated of miseries,—the miseries of wedded life.

No! as the poet says,—

"With caution choose, but then be fondly kind:
The niggard heart that but by halves is given,
Deserves no place in Love's delicious heaven."

But at the same time that woman yields her warm young heart to the novel and entrancing delight of loving (often, alas! "not wisely but too well"), let it be the study of reason, before her senses are enthralled, her mind subdued, and her spirit taken captive, to choose with caution.

Soundness of principle, and purity of faith! if she is secure of these, she cannot go wrong; but what brilliancy of intellect, what beauty or grace, what wealth, or what position, can atone to a Christian woman for the frightful discovery that she is "unequally yoked" with an unbeliever, and the result of such an union let our readers trace in the story of COURTSHIP AND WEDLOCK.

CHAPTER I.

LES MARIAGES DE CONVENANCES.

THE love of titles is inherent in almost every human breast—women, who feel on all subjects more acutely, if not more deeply than men, carry this predilection further, and often achieve the ridiculous in aiming at the sublime. They smile at this folly in our Transatlantic neighbours, who, with their national spirit of exaggeration, exhibit all the foibles they have inherited from their “English mamma,” so magnified, that like insects, seen through the hydro-oxygen microscope, we are disgusted with what would scarce have attracted our notice, or, at worst, only have raised a smile! An innkeeper’s wife, who glories in her husband’s being hailed as a general, while he serves his customers, appears to us a very ridiculous specimen of vulgar vanity, and yet, every would-be fine English lady, who courts some questionable baronet, some *roué* peer, or worse still, some “baron,” “comte,” or “marquis,” and would rather give her daughters to any one of them (little as she knows of them) than to some *sterling* man of *worth* in every sense (if only a plain Mr. —), this lady, though not so grossly ridiculous as Mrs. General Boniface,” across the water, is, at heart, as vain and as vulgar—and so much the more blameable, as her opportunities of forming juster estimates, have been neglected and despised.

Some few seasons ago, two very pretty girls made their *début* in London. They belonged to that large and ever-increasing class, which scorns to be called of the middle, and yet which the highest scarcely recognises—people who contrive to get presented—who may be seen once or twice at Almack’s, trying to look as much at ease, as if they were *habitués* there (among the *élite*, but not of the *élite*), people who lose no opportunity of knowing a lord, no matter whether in his *nonage* or his *dotage*, a young *boy* or an old *bore*—people, in short, of the “aspiring class”—very uncomfortable people they are, and very uncomfortable people to know—generally living beyond their incomes, too obsequious

or too cool, just as they fancy you a *somebody* or a *nobody*—often sadly out in their calculations, and always offending and atoning, courting and repelling—climbing and stumbling by turns! Poor Mrs. Orde!—"Mrs. Colonel Orde," as she had the very bad taste to write, or rather print herself on her cards—was a pretty, and clever, and would have been a charming woman had she belonged to any other class, and had she cultivated any other taste, than for titles and fine people!

She loved her daughters with an affection, at once lively and intense, and would have made any sacrifice to their happiness, but that of this "ruling passion" of her heart. It had been irritated into action, and increased to morbidity, by what she considered the brilliant marriages of her nieces, the "Beauchamp girls," as she always slightly called them, who, with less beauty, less fortune, and fewer accomplishments than her own Rosalie and Jeannetta possessed, had by means of a *good* introduction, and a *bad* ambition, married, the one an old, decrepit, dissipated peer, the other an Italian marquis, attached to an embassy, with nothing real about him but his enormous appetite, his insolent and public inconstancy, his furious passions, and his perfectly artistic talent in making up a bald, sallow, savage, dark-looking skeleton, into a bland, graceful, blooming, elegant cavalier.

All that Nature had done towards this result was the bestowing on him a very tall, majestic, large-boned frame, a pair of lustrous black eyes, and a showy nose. Art supplied a ventilating perruque, on which both hair and head were so perfect, the imposition was not only never detected, but never even suspected. Art dyed, with corresponding glossy black, the grisly eye-brows, moustaches, and whiskers, tinted the cheeks and lips, supplied two dazzling rows of pearly teeth, rounded to perfection the hollowed, lanky form, and sent forth be-furred, be-braided, covered with orders, and fragrant of heliotrope, the Marchese di Castelnovo—the admired of all admirers, the envied of the men, the courted of the women, and who, two hours before he left the temple of art (his dressing-room), was a squalid, shrunken wreck—bald, toothless, old, and ugly!

Still he was the Marquis de Castelnuovo, *attaché* to one embassy, and expecting to be himself an ambassador, received at court, and fêted everywhere; and such as he was, in reality, some thirty years her senior, Louisa Beauchamp, at eighteen, fell desperately in love with him, bestowed herself and her ten thousand pounds upon him, and was considered by all her English friends to have made a brilliant match, almost equal in splendour to that of her sister Augusta, whose husband, though an English peer, had none of the personal advantages of the marquis, whose bald head glistened like a new-born mushroom; whose nose and chin approximated sadly; who cared more for comfort than for show; whose corpulence no belt restrained; who never tried to please, but only to be pleased—made love to every pretty woman, because it amused him to do so, and married, from a mere freak, and because a nephew, whom he envied and disliked, admired the blooming Augusta, and asked her to “polk” with him; and the artful young husband-hunter having coldly declined, whispered into the ear of the old beau, “Does Captain Trevanion not know how much I prefer sitting by you, to dancing with him? His conversation after yours is like luke-warm bucellas after iced champagne.”

The Earl of Tunbridge looked into the softly animated face of Miss Beauchamp. She gazed tenderly at him—“I’ll marry, I’ll have an heir yet, and cut out that puppy,” he thought. He proposed, was joyfully accepted, and, at the end of a month, Augusta became Countess of Tunbridge.

Throw the bridal veil over both those weddings. It is not yet time to lift it, and to ask, what lies beyond those piles of silver favours, orange wreaths, gay *trousseaux*, glittering gems, and white kid gloves? At present, all we know is, that envy whitened the very lips that tried to smile congratulation; that every letter of every female friend or foe of the Beauchamps was full of nothing but these splendid matches; that Lady Beauchamp was in a fever of ecstasy, though left alone in her glory, for the marquis took his bride at once to his palazzo at Florence, and the Earl of Tunbridge carried his countess and his chronic rheumatism to Baden-Baden.

And of all whose heads these nuptials filled with schemes ; of all whose hearts, in consequence, beat high with emulation, none, perhaps, surpassed the aunt of the brides, whose daughters, Rosalie and Jeannetta, had officiated among the bridesmaids, and whose appearance had elicited so much admiration, that their mother resolved to accelerate, by one year, the projected and long-wished-for season of their introduction.

CHAPTER II.

THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTERS, AND THE OLD SCOTCH AUNT.

Mrs. ORDE had a very handsome jointure, and her daughters six thousand pounds a-piece in actual possession, as much more on their attaining their majority, and a reversionary interest in a thousand a-year, dependent on their mother's death, but which, as she was of a good constitution and in the prime of life, it seemed probable would not very soon be theirs. Of this interest, the girls knew nothing, and they loved their mother so tenderly, that they would have hated the bare idea of any benefit to be purchased by her loss.

It was at the close of the season that the brilliant weddings of the "Beauchamp girls" had taken place, and Mrs. Orde having determined to introduce her own daughters next spring in London, resolved to pass the interval in improving to the utmost their personal and mental attractions. She was quite of Dr. Johnson's opinion, that "though there may be health without beauty, there is no beauty without health," and therefore she resolved to spend the autumn and the winter, which were to precede "the season in town," in that healthiest of all watering places, Brighton.

Mrs. Orde herself was of Scotch descent, a Macpherson by name, and though born and bred in England she had inherited much of the beauty, something of the accent, and many of the prejudices and peculiarities which distinguish the daughters of Scotia. There is generally in

the *true* Scotch character, a sort of simple shrewdness (or shrewd simplicity), a quaint mixture of pride and humility, of gentleness and daring, of warmth of heart and reserve of manner, which make it, to our minds, as original as it is fascinating. All these peculiarities were, however, much more prominently marked in the character of Miss Jenny Macpherson, an old Scotch aunt of Mrs. Orde's, who, having outlived all her other relatives, left "Bonnie Glasgow" where she was, as she said, the "centre of a circle!" (of old Scotch spinsters by the way) "to gie to her ain niece, and her dear grandnieces, the benefit o' her experience, and o' her countenance."

Miss Jenny Macpherson, far too proud to be indebted to any one, insisted on making a fair remuneration for her board, lodging, and an occasional "cast in the corridge." She was quick, kind, proud, very irascible, vain of her by-gone charms—of some pretensions to literary taste (albeit old-fashioned in her notions), and gloriously proud of her own sex.

Looking upon woman as the best, and therefore the most finished work of the creation, warmly sympathizing with the Flora M'Ivors, the Helen M'Gregors of her land, and upholding independence of character and mental superiority throughout the female world; pitying the gentle, and despising the meek among her sex; dignified enough, when any flattery was addressed to herself personally, but very accessible to any praise, however hyperbolic and enthusiastic, when her sex was its object. In proportion to her habit of over-rating woman, was that of under-rating man, whose place in the creation she attributed to brute force, whose weaknesses she delighted in pointing out, whose attentions she professed always to have despised, and about whom she generally concluded by saying—"Indeed, niece Orde, had these na' been my sentiments fra' early girlhood, and hod I, amang hosts o' admeerers, found ain I could conscientiously vow to 'love, honour, and obey,' I'd noo be, na a hale, harty, independent speenster, wi' a wull o' my ain, and a gude name o' my ain, but some puir, sickly, worn-out wife of some tyrant mon, wi' disobedient sons to pro-veede for, and helpless dochters to marry. I'd hae na' a penny at my ain command, nor git ain, nor a bill paid,

without a grudge and a grunt, and I'd na' hae the pride o' writing mysel' Jenny Macpherson to the end, or of kenning that that spotless name will gang wi' me to the grave, and brighten up the coffin lid o' the last o' her race."

To these and similar remarks, Mrs. Orde, a woman of the world, who had been many years a wife, without being a slave, sometimes replied with a strength of argument which aroused all the energies of the old Scotch spinster, and often put her into a violent passion; but more frequently she only smiled at what she considered an old maid's spite against mankind, and tried to counteract the influence of such rebellious sentiments by pointing out to her daughters how easily woman

"Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
And has her humour most, when she obeys."

This common policy suited well enough the gentle, temporizing nature of pretty Rosalie Orde, who inherited her mother's fair hair, blue eyes, soft features and feminine nature (we use *feminine* in the common acceptation of the term); but Jeannetta was cast in a different mould; frank, daring, romantic, true to the heart's core, and proud as Miss Jenny Macpherson herself, but of a pride less tinged with caricature—Jeannetta scorned the policy which bids her sex to "stoop to conquer," which upholds cunning as woman's best resource, and makes *manœuvring* not only a work of necessity, but a labour of love. She did not share her aunt's absurd and crotchety notions of woman's superiority and man's insignificance; but she insisted on *equality*, possibly because her frank nature, proud spirit, and brave heart convinced her that she, individually, at least had, like Elizabeth, the heart of a king, and felt strong in her own internal conviction that Seneca erred in believing there is a sex in the soul.

Her beauty, inherited from her father (the brave Colonel Orde, whose bones whitened on a foreign soil), was of the Flora M'Ivor school, and perfect of its kind, and the few who had been fortunate enough to see the forthcoming beauties, declared that neither Minna and Brenda, nor any other brunette and blonde, of poetry or romance, could more sweetly represent "Night and Morning," than did Rosalie and Jeannetta Orde.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST LOVE."

THEY were a very happy and a very merry party, were the Ordes and Miss Macpherson, during this lovely autumn at Brighton, located in one of the handsomest houses on the Marine Parade; the beautiful sea "ever varying, yet still the same," delighting them by its grandeur when they wearied of watching the gay triflers, riding, driving, walking, bowing, ogling, jesting, coquetting and sentimentalizing on the parade, beneath their windows. When sick of the artificial smile, the empty laugh, the vacant stare; "the flatteries paid to fellow worms." It was delightful to Jeannetta to see the sun go down in golden glory like a dying king, and the moon rise like our own fair queen, chaste and mild, in silver purity, to reign in the old monarch's place. Then did she love to watch the court of stars that gathered round her, and the silver tokens she gave, in queenly bounty, to every bowing wave; then every sail that shone in the distance had a charm for her fancy, and every cloud that stole over the moon's fair face thrilled her with sweet memories of "Alp, the Renegade," or passionate "Corinne."

Meanwhile her kind, fond mother sate by the bright fire, always welcome on an autumnal evening at Brighton, her fingers busy with some gay silken web, her fancy with a gayer still, woven of the threads of her young daughters' destinies, and pretty Rosalie enjoyed the while some sprightly tale of modern life by Mrs. Trollope or Mrs. Grey, and Miss Macpherson revelled in some old romance where woman was duly adored, or worked Joan of Arc in coloured worsteds, as a *pendant* to a gorgeous screen representing Queen Bess before the Fort at Tilbury. And well did the whole scene prove how happy women can be, if man will but let them, or as Miss Jenny said, "let them alane." "For my part, niece Orde," she would often exclaim, "the introduction of ain mon into a happy hame o' females, seems to me much like that o' the auld serpent into the garden of Eden—wi' mon comes vanity, envy, jealousy, heart-burnings, bock-bitings,

weeping and gnashing o' teeth. My proud darling Jeannetta, and my sweet smiling Rosalie! Ah niece Orde, when once some wily suitors darken these doors, Jeannetta will grow tame, and Rosalie flighty; ye'll see the proud Jane fade in the ain, sweet Psyche in the ither; ye'll ken na mair that ye hae twa dochters, nor I that I hae twa grond nieces."

The good-humoured Mrs. Orde smiled at these dark prophecies, which she inwardly considered as the crotchets of a disappointed old maid, and longed none the less, as she laughingly told Rosalie, to see some *suitors* who were really likely to sit, not darken the doors but brighten the fire-side!

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CHAPTER IV.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

How silently, how mysteriously, and often how unconsciously to herself, does woman admit into her proud, young heart, that vague, indefinite, and peculiar interest, which, if the chances of life permit, ripens into first and passionate love! Already unknown to themselves, and unsuspected by mother or great aunt, trembles at each young heart that strange delicious emotion which makes the proudest queen a weeping slave, and the merriest, vainest flirt the amusing, self-disparaging, and meditative maid.

From that bay window which commanded at once the gay parade and solemn sea, and where Jeannetta (book in hand) so delights to sit, and where to all outward seeming she sate as at first, the proud young beauty! in maiden meditation, fancy-free—even in that retreat, the boy-god's shaft has grazed if not quite pierced her bosom. Among the many idle worshippers of idle beauty, who glance or gaze, accordingly as they are polished or rude, at that small head of classic mould, with its profusion of raven hair braided in waves over that proud, white brow, and gathered behind those small and beautiful ears, falling in rich and plaited loops on the swan-like throat—among the many whose admiration

does not induce the maiden to raise her eyes from her engrossing book, there is one strange contrast, whose approach she feels, even though she scarcely sees it, and whose earnest but timid gaze, as he glides past, is answered by a flutter at the heart, and a sudden rose upon the cheek. It was easy to perceive that the object of this vague and secret interest was a foreigner, the tallest of three handsome-looking men, who were constantly on the parade—or walking, driving, riding, or shopping, by some strange chance or design, wherever the Ordes were to be met. Yes, the tallest and most distinguished of these strangers seemed to Jeannetta's romantic fancy, the very perfection of manly beauty—and indeed, though many found fault with the expression of his countenance, none could deny the perfection of both his face and form. In short, the peculiarities which offended others, were what peculiarly fascinated Jeannetta—a seriousness which sometimes approached to sternness, and a pride which often boarded on *hauteur*, sometimes even on disdain—these were sure to displease the *mediocre*, who, conscious of mediocrity, saw in them an assumption of superiority. Not so Jeannetta: a kindred pride in herself, and scorn of all that was mean and common-place (that is to say, of the mass of man and womankind), established a sympathy between herself and the haughty stranger, the moment their glances met; and the power of the brightest sun upon the blackest frost was not greater than that of Jeannetta's one furtive glance, on that majestic, scornful face! A softness, amounting almost to tenderness, and a deference that had in it something almost adoring, replaced his proud reserve as he made way for Jeannetta to examine a print he had been looking at in the public library, and he stooped and actually smiled (as the proud only can smile), in restoring to her a card-case she had dropped in her confusion. Jeannetta noted nothing of his companions, whom Rosalie and Mrs. Orde admired far beyond him, whom they at once nicknamed "The Corsair!" One of these was a stout, middle-aged man of handsome face and portly figure, moustached, whiskered, and bebraided; and the other, a light, elegant-looking *blond*, graceful, smiling and courteous. Jeannetta did

hear the younger one call "The Corsair" Gnozalve, and did see that the name he traced in "the book" was Le Comte de Montfaucon—but she knew not, till Rosalie said so, that the middle-aged beau was Le Capitaine Crève-cœur, and the younger one Le Baron de Saint Felix.

CHAPTER V.

RIVAL AUNTS AND RIVAL COUSINS.

AND Rosalie Orde (a much more general favourite than the proud Jeannetta), has she too, thrown away the first interest of her heart, on one of whom she knows nothing, but that he is "born her foe," alike in land, in habits, and, more important still, in religion? No! of a nature far less lofty but more sensible, with far less of useless genius, but much more of available talent, less commanding, but far more winning, Rosalie saw nothing in these foreigners, with their dashing exterior and high-sounding names, to do more than provoke a smile at their evident admiration! They could never cost Rosalie a sigh—there was a dear old rector of the village, where Mrs. Orde's elegant country seat was situated, and this dear old rector had a dearer son! In childhood, he had been the playmate, and in early youth the companion of Jeannetta and of Rosalie; and left motherless in infancy, kind-hearted Mrs. Orde had supplied to him for many years, by her gentle and judicious affection, the parent he had lost.

Old Dr. Esdaile, his father, was a man of good family and good private fortune, independent of the excellent living, of which the advowson was settled on his only child, Gerard; and Gerard Esdaile, a fine, manly youth, promising scholar, and of a noble disposition, was certainly a very fair match for either of the Misses Orde, or for any other young lady of similar birth and fortune. The old doctor was of this opinion, and so was Gerard himself. Mrs. Orde had entertained some notions of the kind (in common with the whole neighbourhood of Woodburn), until the luckless hour (luckless at least

for poor Gerard) when the Woodburn postman brought to Woodburn Hall, the bag containing Lady Beauchamp's triumphant announcement of her two daughters' brilliant conquests, their approaching nuptials, and an invitation to the Misses Orde to officiate as bridesmaids.

Poor Mrs. Orde! from that moment "a change stole o'er the spirit of her dream;" ambition, inmate, alas! of almost every female breast, awoke from his long repose like a giant refreshed. Mrs. Orde was what is commonly called an amiable woman. She was kind and hospitable to her friends, passionately fond of her children, and very charitable to the poor; but she had many, nay, almost all the weakness of her sex. Her quiet mode of life, since her widowhood, had not drawn these weaknesses out, but there they lay, and started into life and full stature, as she read Lady Beauchamp's letter.

There had ever been a smouldering jealousy between the sisters-in-law, (for such were Lady Beauchamp and Mrs. Orde). Rival beauties as girls, they were equally so as brides and wives; and both, by a strange coincidence, were left widows, with two little girls, each little pair promisingly lovely; and if Mrs. Orde's pecuniary position was the most eligible, Lady Beauchamp's connexions, as the widow of an old baronet, gave her some advantages, greater even than those of wealth. The jealousy and rivalry, which had grown in each vain heart from girlhood, even to widowhood, increased tenfold, when each had two dearer selves to delight and to glory in, and both mothers fell into the mean and vulgar error, of disparaging her sister's children and of overrating her own.

It must be owned that it was Lady Beauchamp who commenced this contemptible system, for she had not the native good nature and commonplace amiability of Mrs. Orde. Mrs. Orde's impulses were always kind; and though she might be excited or provoked to evil, there was nothing consistently malicious or mean in her nature. It was always an effort to her to carry out any little revenge she had planned. She was simple and unsuspecting too; and would have been a very amiable woman and a very affectionate aunt, but for the evil example set, and the constant provocations given, by Lady Beauchamp.

Lady Beauchamp was interested, ambitious, proud, and mean at once; very ill-natured, yet rather good-tempered—(no anomaly, though it sounds like one)—bitter in heart, but sweet in manner, wounding with coaxing words, and stabbing with a soft smile. She hated her sister-in-law, and she loathed her nieces; the more so, as even to a mother's eye the Ordes, as they grew to womanhood, surpassed the "Beauchamp girls" in stature, form, and face. They had inherited all their mother's jealousies, and with interest; cousins seldom escape that wretched heritage of rivalry and envy; and one of the strongest inducements to Miss Beauchamp to become the Countess of Tunbridge, to wed her eighteen summers and her budding beauty to seventy winters and a decrepitude which had nothing endearing, but all that was disgusting, was the thought, early suggested by her mother, of "the envy of aunt Orde, and the spite of both her cousins."

This wretched feeling was stronger in the young girl's heart, fostered, guiltily fostered, as it had been from the very cradle, than even woman's natural love of precedence, or her delight in the pomps and vanities she swears so solemnly to abjure.

From a marriage contracted through such motives, what can we expect? "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" Were not misery and disgrace ever the pale and haggard offspring of malice, of envy, and of revenge?

Alas! alas! what a fatal, what an awful power do we exert over each other! With what careless hands we hold, and twist, and knot, and tangle the threads of an immortal destiny! How cruelly we polish, and we point words that may prove deadly weapons! The coaxing tone of ill-concealed triumph in which Lady Beauchamp conveyed the news of her daughters' approaching weddings, the almost tender disparagement of her tone, and, in speaking of her nieces, the spiteful play of her sarcasm, changed the whole tenor of Mrs. Orde's feelings, views, and wishes; and as she read, raised a barrier between her daughters and Gerard Esdaile, which entailed much of misery on him, and were the remote cause of whatever evil may befall either Rosalie or Jeannetta, in

the perilous voyage of life on which their mother hastens to launch them.

It might interest a reader who loves to trace effects to their causes, to cast his eyes over the contents of the glazed, scented, delicately penned, crossed and re-crossed epistle, which awoke so many slumbering fiends in the gentle bosom of Mrs. Orde.

This poisonous communication ran as follows;—but was so carefully concocted, and so important in its results, as to deserve to begin a new, instead of ending an old chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO-EDGED SWORDS.

“MY DEAREST SISTER,—Although the chances of life have kept us so much asunder, my heart has never been really severed from the friend of the ‘auld lang syne,’ the widow of my beloved and lamented brother! the mother of his children! In joy or in sorrow, my Rosalie! the first impulse of your poor Barbara is to seek sympathy, congratulation, or counsel in your friendly bosom; and if I seldom yield to the sweet temptation, it is because our lots are cast in such different spheres. The world of fashion is governed by laws so different from those of your secluded and rustic village, that it would be as absurd in reality for me to ask your advice in matters of ambition, taste, or etiquette, as for you to consult me about the management of your Sunday-school, the shape of the flannel waistcoats you give your old men, or the gruel, blankets, and red cloaks, you send to your old women at Christmas. To this conviction, therefore, you must attribute my not having given you any account of the progress of events during the first season in town of my darling girls—events which for some weeks have cast their shadows, or rather their sunshine, before. Alas! alas! my Rosalie, what an inscrutable thing is a mother’s heart! We train our darlings to shine in the eyes of men, we watch their beauties ripen, and adorn them with every grace and

every accomplishment, and when the object of all this care is won, and our sweet ones carry off the palm of beauty and of talent, and obtain the legitimate object of all female education, early and brilliant establishments, we feel more inclined to weep for the daughters we lose, than to glory in the titles and precedence that they win. You, my sister, will probably be spared the silly feeling that makes your poor Barbara smile and weep alternately, more like a bride herself than the mother of the happy and triumphant creatures. Yes, my Rosalie, should *you* ever be called upon so resign one of your dear girls, it will probably be some years hence, to some dear, quiet, country clergyman, or some frank-hearted neighbouring squire, a Gerard Esdaile or a Matthew Moody, who would not remove them from your immediate circle, or elevate them above the quiet sphere, in which I am convinced true happiness is to be found. And to what is all this a preliminary? asks my sweet, but ever curious Rosalie. Charming impatience! You will learn, with more pleasure than surprise, perhaps, that my dear girls are both on the eve of forming splendid, alas! I fear too splendid alliances. But though you might dread such lofty matches for your own lovely recluses, do not forget that Sir William Beauchamp, if he left his widow a smaller dower, and his daughters more slender portions than did my brother, bequeathed them a name often linked of yore with those of the nobility, and a connexion which threw them at once in the way of the magnates of the land. Yes, Rosalie, with mingled feelings I must tell you, that this day week my Louisa will become the Marchioness of Castelnuovo, and my Augusta will bestow her hand on the Earl of Tunbridge. My Louisa is in the wildest trance of first love, for this marquis (one of the handsomest and most elegant of men) is the object of a passion such as it is seldom the fate of a young lady of fashion to feel, and still less for him it is deemed expedient for her to marry. My Augusta, less romantic, has, I think, consulted the heart less, and the head more, in her approaching marriage. The Earl of Tunbridge, though still a fine and agreeable man, is considerably her senior; but if the daughter is satisfied, this should surely be no objection in her mother's eyes;

and perhaps she may really prefer a man of that age, as I did myself—one older still! Be it as it may, both the dear girls seem wild with joy, and all is bustle, finery, love gifts, dressing, millinery, mantua-makers, love-making and dress-making, planning and preparing. I am almost worn out. My noble and enamoured sons-in-law elect are unwearied in devotion to me; and I assure you I was never so courted since I myself was a *demoiselle à marier*. Since I began this letter I have been called away half a dozen times. First, to superintend the fitting on of Augusta's exquisite wedding dress, of Brussels lace, over white satin, in which she really proves 'how divine a thing a woman may be made.'

"Scarcely was this important duty done, than up drives Foster himself, in his own carriage, and with two of his men laden with cartons; and as my darlings will do nothing without mamma's advice and sanction, I have had to select not only the orange wreaths, favours, and bouquets, but to choose all the flowers for all their gay ball-dresses.

"Scarcely had I returned to my desk, when the marquis sends a note, offering an opera-box for this evening, and begging leave to dine with his 'adorable divine Louisa;' and the Earl of Tunbridge calls with a splendid shawl for poor me, and a determination to make us all to dine with him at Greenwich on white bait. Between the two lovers, and the two girls, I know not what to do. Louisa pouts, Augusta weeps, so to please both, I agree to command the marquis to attend us to the earl's Greenwich dinner, and to insist on the earl's accompanying us back in time for the opera.

"This little specimen will convince you, Rosalie, how much I love you, to send you an epistle like this, at such a time. The bridesmaids will wear pale blue—I grieve that I cannot offer you beds, but will engage rooms at Mivart's, or Watson's. I send you the *Court Journal*, and the *Lady's Newspaper*, in both you will see many elegant and pointed allusions to the approaching nuptials, and the beauty of the brides-elect. In a clever article on 'Ornaments, ancient and modern,' you will perceive that it is Augusta's through-bred and finished style which is alluded to, as essential to give effect to the

classic tiara. Indeed, the Tunbridge diamonds have just been re-set for her. But *I must* conclude—I hear Castelnovo's fine voice in the hall, and I never like to give men (however devoted and immaculate) more than five minutes *tête-à-tête* with any girl, however exquisite, or virtuous. The old aphorism says, 'Familiarity breeds contempt,' and our eloquent poet exclaims, 'Beauty soon grows familiar to the lover;' added to which I believe all men will encroach, and that perhaps the more they love and are loved, and he comes too near who comes to be denied.

"The marquis has just sent me up a bouquet, a box of *bon-bons*, and Manzoni's new novel, with a note-message expressing a hope, that as his impatience had induced him to intrude somewhat earlier than usual, I will not stand on ceremony, or inconvenience myself to come down before my customary hour. Sly marquis! cunning lover! On ne trompe ni less yeux ni le cœur d'une mère. Your evident wish to keep me away, only hastens my approach.

"My girls send best love to their cousins, but cannot find a moment to write a line.

"Addio, carissima! I am half Italian now—and between the magic delights of Castelnovo's palazzo at Rome, and his castle in Tuscany, and the noble comforts of Tunbridge Park, and the earl's villa at Twickenham, I fear I shall become a sad gad-about, and quite l'*étranger* chez elle.

"Ever your devoted sister,

"BARBARA BEAUCHAMP.

"A line to say when you will arrive."

CHAPTER VII.

A MOTHER'S FONDNESS.

THE retrospective glance we have cast over Lady Beauchamp's letter will explain to any one who knows the heart of woman in its ordinary state, the effect it produced on Mrs. Orde and Rosalie, and even on the

prouder and less vain natures of Jeannetta and Miss Macpherson.

Lady Beauchamp's innuendo that such lofty alliances were quite out of the question for her nieces, and the quiet contemplation of their remaining single many years, and at the best, forming such humdrum connexions (as those with Gerard Esdaile and young Squire Moody would be), had raised a fierce flame of maternal indignation in Mrs. Orde's bosom, and made her not only resolved that her girls should, if possible, eclipse their cousins, but caused her to hate the very presence of poor Gerard, and the young fox-hunter, as having been even named with her daughters. All this was very weak and commonplace; but who shall deny that it was natural—natural to the ordinary run of mothers—ay, even of what the world calls good mothers, too! Mothers who are perhaps more fondly loved, and more bitterly lamented, than those who take a wiser and a calmer view of the things of this life, and act upon a juster estimate of its perishing fripperies.

Madame de Stael with searching and mortifying truth exclaims: "*C'est par nos défauts que nous gouvernons.*" And alas! who that ever watched the effect of a passionate, an obstinate or a sarcastic temper, in any household, can dispute the miserable fact. But if it be true that it is by our very faults we govern others, it is no less a fact, and far from an exhilarating one too, that it is by our foibles we attach them.

The mother who, with a most enviable faith and a heart somewhat weaned from too much of earthly love, gently and resolutely performs her maternal duties, and quietly trusts all things to the Great Dispenser of all, is an admirable Christian philosopher; but is she ever adored in childhood, cherished through life, and passionately and lastingly lamented in death, like that fond, anxious, erring, trembling mother who acts as if she thought her short-sighted devotion and her foolish cares could be a Providence to her child?—the mother who alas, does not calmly trust that all will be well, but passionately fears lest ill should come—whose cheek grows white with fear if that of her darling pales for a moment—to whose ear a cough is a knell—and who at dead of night

steals from her warm couch, not merely to "watch the stars out by the bed of pain" (the less earthly mother will do that); but to torture herself with fancying fever in the warm glow of health, perhaps even to disturbing, by the very anxiety meant to protect.

The memory of such a mother bending over our little beds with "dewy looks of love," is one of the most passionate and haunting, when in arid after years, we wake to real suffering of mind or body, and find none watching, and hear no voice of comfort, and feel no kiss of unutterable love; and so on, through life, even when we are no longer of an age "to hear as a child, to see as a child," but when it is indeed time "to put away childest things," how the heart clings to the mother, whose eye kindles, and whose cheek burns at our wrongs (fancied or real), who glories even in her daughter's silly triumphs, her vanities and her conquests over "fellow worms;" yea, takes a pride in every new ball dress and new admirer.

"Blind guides leading the blind." The gentle hand that in infancy takes a pride in fixing in our hats or caps the gay cockades which, to the thinking, are perhaps the colours of Belial, or the badges of Mammon, is dearer than that which wisely plucks away, with a gentle firmness, anything that savours of the livery of vanity; and the fingers that are never weary of training our silky tresses into graceful curls, are lovelier even to our memories than those which calmly sever the useless ornaments from the empty head, or neatly and hastily braid them away, as things too paltry to matter to one who has to win and wear the helmet of righteousness and the shield of faith; and so on throughout the weak indulgences, which it is such pleasure to bestow and such virtue to refuse! How even the recollection of them binds wise and strong men to the fond and feeble mother, long gone down to the grave!

Who does not sympathize with Cowper's passionate tribute to her, whose very weaknesses he has clothed with so beguiling and immortal a charm?—

"Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionery plum;

The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed
By thine own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed."

Ah, how much of woman's weak indulgence of her own fond heart, does even the pious Cowper immortalize in this most exquisite of his poems: "the nightly visit," "the fragrant waters," "the biscuit or confectionery plum." The weak indulgence, not the wise denial.

But Johnson! even Johnson, he too hesitates not to declare, that he should never have loved or mourned his mother as he had done, had she not in his childhood indulged his appetite beyond what was reasonable, and allowed him coffee and other dainties which she could ill afford, and which it would have been much wiser to have denied.

With the most devout of poets, and with "the colossus of literature" on their sides, who shall blame weak woman for indulging the very foibles which, as we have too clearly proved, attach even the strongest? Who shall marvel that Mrs. Orde was all the dearer, even to the most lofty-minded of her daughters, for her maternal indignation at the mortifying inuendoes of the cat-like aunt, whose *patte de velours* scarcely concealed the sharp and ready claws? who shall marvel that none blamed as she built her airy castles on no better foundation than vanity and vengeance, and that if Rosalie eagerly tried to shield poor guiltless Gerard Esdaile from her mother's ill deserved anger and contempt, the effort was owing not to evenhanded justice, but to a onesided partiality?—else poor young Moody would have shared in her eloquent endeavours to justify the innocent, and that was very far from being the case. Nay, as it was the young fox-hunter who had ever seemed disposed to bestow on Rosalie whatever time and attentions he could spare from his dogs, his horses, and his chief cronies, the whippers-in of the — hunt, so it was the ungrateful girl herself, who was most anxious to do away with any impression that his visits had any particular object, or that he had presumed to raise his eyes to one who so entirely despised him, his tastes, habits, and pursuits.

What a pity that from all time Dan Cupid has ever been at cross purposes! The juice of "the little western flower, purple with love's wound" is in every love philtre,

and plays as wild work now as it did with Helena and Hermia, Demetrius and Lysander, Titania and he of the ass's head.

Yes, it was to Jeannetta Orde that Gerard raised his eyes as to the load-star of his very soul. It was her face which made—

"The star-light of his boyhood,
He had no thought, no being but in hers.
Upon a tone, a touch of hers, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously;
But she in these fond feelings had no share.

* * * * *

She had not loved him, nor given him cause to deem himself
beloved.

To her he was even as a brother, it was a name
Which pleased him, and yet pleased him not, for why?
Time taught him a deep answer when she loved another!
Even now she loves another!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE SURPRISE.

THE Ordes did not inhabit the whole of the spacious and very expensive house on the Marine Parade, in which we find them located; they had hired only the upper portion of it, and that at an enormously high rent; but as they had only part of their establishment with them, and meant to give no parties, they found they had "room, and to spare."

The proprietor of the house lived in some remote part of it, no one knew where; he was an old oddity, a reputed miser, and very rarely to be seen, except at the hiring of his apartments, or once a month to receive his exorbitant rents. The ground-floor of this mansion, which was very spacious, and very elegantly furnished, was unlet during the first month of Mrs. Orde's residence at Brighton. All the old landlord's movements were so quiet and cat-like, that none of our party were aware of the event, that the ground-floor was taken on a bright morning when Rosalie and Jeannetta, who were taking singing lessons of a celebrated pro-

fessor then at Brighton, left home, as usual, for that purpose, directly after breakfast, and before their mother had appeared.

On their return, about three hours later, they found a note from her lying on the hall table. It had been given to the young ladies' maid, who, slipping out on a shopping expedition for herself, had put it down there that her mistresses might see it directly they came in. Jeannetta eagerly tore it open, and read,—

"DEAREST GIRLS,—The post brought me word that your aunt Beauchamp is ill, alone in London, and in some great distress. She begs me to come to her at once, not to lose the first train, so I start directly; but shall be back this evening. If you and Rosalie will come to meet me in the pony phaeton, as I shall dine in town, we can drive, as we proposed, to the Devil's Dyke, before returning home. See old Grimes, and tell him I will settle with him to-morrow. I shall go to Coutts's, and bring all the money we want. Your aunt goes with me both for company's sake, and to receive her dividends.

"Jeannetta, love, you will drive, and the page will be enough.

"Dine early, as I shall do; and meet me at four.—
Your fond mother, "R. O."

"I wonder what can be the matter with aunt Beauchamp," said Jeannetta. "There seems some mystery. I hope that wicked-looking old earl has not turned out to have been married before, or done Louisa any harm."

"Oh, no, dearest," replied, laughingly, the more shrewd and matter-of-fact Rosalie; "I suspect she wants to borrow more money of mamma, and, perhaps, to get invited here, that she may see what is going on, and put a stop, if possible, to any chance of your marrying as well as our cousins have done."

"Of *my* marrying as well? Say, rather, your doing so, Rosalie. I am the last person in the world to make what is called a good match. I shall consult nothing but my heart if I ever do marry, and a *mariage de convenances* is very seldom one of *inclination* too; but *you*, darling, who laugh at what you call my 'romance,' it is

for you to realize our dear mother's expectations, and disappoint our jealous aunt's."

"For me, is it?" laughed Rosalie; but she blushed as she thought of Gerard Esdaile, and how her mother would oppose, and her aunt rejoice, in such a match as that.

The girls were lingering on the landing-place as they spoke, Rosalie's arm about Jeannetta's waist, as the latter picked the dead leaves from some shrubs that stood in tubs before her. At this moment both started, for a very rich and deep bass voice, accompanied by a guitar, beautifully touched, rose in a rich volume from the ground-floor, and "A te, O cara," sung as they had never heard it sung before, kept them both entranced.

Rosalie's cheek caught "the orient blush of quick surprise," as she listened in smiling wonder; but Jeannetta grew very pale, caught tight hold of Rosalie's arm, and turned away to hide the tears which gathered in her large black eyes.

Jeannetta's heart, with the instinct of first love, told her whose voice that was; but how it came there was a mystery, and all the dearer to her for being so.

Rosalie explained it at once, and startled Jeannetta as she exclaimed,—

"Old Grimes must have let the ground-floor! and, I dare say, to one of the handsome foreigners, who are always walking up and down, and following us about."

One of the handsome foreigners! How soulless seemed Rosalie at that moment to her sister, as if any but *one* could own that voice!

"Well," said Rosalie, "if they get introduced this house will be more amusing, but we shall not be half so much at ease; even now there is no knowing when one of them may pop out. So come, darling, we must away, away."

CHAPTER IX.

AN ADVENTURE.

ROSALIE and Jeannetta set out betimes to meet their mother and Miss Jenny Macpherson. Jeannetta was a good and spirited whip, and drove the pretty pair of thorough-bred grey ponies in high style. She had a shrewd idea that the distinguished foreigners (though not visible) were watching her from behind the curtains of the windows, and she thought, though it sent a nervous tremour to her heart and hand, that it added to her outward dignity and composure.

Mrs. Orde and Miss Jenny arrived (for a wonder) by the train they had specified. The page was sent home in charge of the luggage, and the four ladies set off in high spirits for the Devil's Dyke, revelling in a soft autumnal breeze, and lighted by a sun which seemed by his splendid radiance and gorgeous canopy of purple, crimson, and gold, to be resolved to reign as long as he could, and make a glorious exit at last.

Little as the girls had reason to love their aunt, Lady Beauchamp, they were very glad to hear that Rosalie's conjecture was well grounded. "A disorder in the chest," *id est*, the money chest, as Theodore Hook said, was all she was really suffering from—although it suited her to assume the airs of an invalid.

"Before I had agreed to lend her what she wanted," laughed Mrs. Orde, "she received me in bed—her room darkened—her voice low—her manner dejected. She spoke hopelessly of herself, disparagingly of her daughters, bitterly of her sons-in-law."

"And na' without cause, I'm thinking," said Miss Jenny.

"Why, yes, afterwards, aunt, it seemed without any cause except to enlist my sympathies and untie, at once, my purse-strings and my heart-strings."

"But what did she complain of, mamma?" asked Rosalie.

"Till she had gained her point, my love, she complained that the lordly bridegrooms had insisted on her paying down, at once, the whole four thousand pounds a-piece,

your cousins' fortunes, although their father left it optional with her to advance only 2,000*l.*, at first, which she would infinitely have preferred doing, as the loss of the interest of the whole 8,000*l.* so seriously diminishes her small income."

"But is it possible, mamma," asked Rosalie, "that an earl and a marquis could really care about a paltry 2,000*l.* more or less, of capital, with such incomes as theirs must be?"

"Could a real lover," sighed Jeannetta, "give a moment's thought to such vile dross, or deprive the mother of his chosen, of one comfort, or his bride of the happiness of seeing that he loved her for herself alone, and her mother for her sake!"

"Ah, *puir bairn*, ye ken mon folk but ill; and may ye never ken them better to yer cost! I'm sair mistaken if the *puir* four thousand pounds had na much weight baith wi' the airl and the marquis."

"Well, at first (to hear Lady Beauchamp) any one would have thought so but Jenny. She said that both lovers, while affecting to despise the girls' fortunes, as scarcely worth a word or a thought, and as much too unimportant to admit of any trouble or delay about settling such 'a nothing,' were, nevertheless, strangely resolved to clutch every penny of this contemptible '*bagatelle*,' which, said poor Lady Beauchamp, however paltry in their eyes, producing me five per cent. as it did, diminishes my income four hundred a-year, and has only left me a bare six hundred for the rest of my life. I smiled when she added, 'unless I make up my mind to marry again!'"

"To marry again?" exclaimed Jeannetta. "Oh, the debasing, the treacherous thought! oh, that worst of treasons—the treason to the dead!"

"As if," said Rosalie, "at fifty-eight any one would marry aunt Beauchamp, except to diminish and to squander the very six hundred she would marry to increase."

"There's na fule like an auld fule," said Miss Jenny. "Leddy Beauchamp is fule eno' to morry, thinking to mend her fortunes, and mony's the mon, knave eno' to wed her jist to mar them. Six hundred a-year and a wife

of fifty-eight—why, lassie, for half the siller there are dozens, ca'ing themselves gentlemen too, would morrie me myain sel' to-morrow o' saxty-eight!"

"Well, but, mamma, putting that absurd idea out of the question, has aunt Beauchamp really only six hundred a-year left?"

"So she said, my dear, as I tell you, at first, and added that she is deeply in debt, for most expensive, nay, extravagant *trousseaux*, which ought to have been paid for out of her daughters' portions, but for which all the bills are sent in to her, everything having been ordered in her name. She is charged with many articles chosen by the lovers, and ordered for the girls, and which she and they had looked upon as presents; even the very shawl she so boasted of having received, is put down to her at twenty guineas. Then all the expenses of the double wedding, in which she scarcely had a voice, and which was done in a style which, for her, would have been absurd—all falls upon her; though she had no idea, from their taking it out of her hands, and doing everything in a manner so regardless of expense, but that they meant to defray it all entirely themselves."

"Their regardlessness of expense ought to have convinced her, vain fool, that it was *her* expense they were regardless o'—mon is never regardless o' his ain."

"There must be some mistake," said Jeannetta; "they are bridegrooms still, and have forgotten, in the elysium of the heart, all the sordid baseness of the head."

"If I were aunt Beauchamp," said Rosalie, "I should send the bills to the marquis and the earl, with a kind but resolute maternal letter; and if that had no effect, the next should be from my lawyer, and charged thirteen and fourpence!"

"She has written to both, and both having taken good care to have the things ordered in her name, and sent to her house, affect the greatest amazement at an application "so mean and so preposterous." The Earl of Tunbridge insolently observes, that having made a countess of a girl with only four thousand pounds, "barely the portion of a huckster's daughter," he thought he had done quite enough to oblige Lady Beauchamp, and as far as he could judge at present, his bride, unused to her

novel and splendid position, and the ready credit it insured her, would not spend much less than her whole portion, in the first year of her *aggrandizement*.

"The marquis, in a vehement Italian letter, which I could scarcely construe, with its exaggerations of many syllables, assured Lady Beauchamp that in his country, the humblest village maid took her husband not merely a fortune equal to his own, but a *trousseau* stocked to last her life."

"What wretches!" said Rosalie.

"They never loved!" sighed Jeannetta.

"I hope, mamma," said Rosalie, "my poor cousins' fortunes are settled on themselves, small though they be; I suspect those tyrants will let them want else."

"Lady's Beauchamp's answers on that point were very evasive, my dear; but I fear, like most cunning and ambitious people, she has overreached herself. Their own fortunes certainly are not settled on themselves, but, from her account (*after* she had gained her point with me), the earl settled a thousand a-year on Louisa, and the marquis, a castle and estate in Italy, on Augusta—observing, his bride's *little* portion would put the fine old place in repair, and that was all."

"A castle in Italy," said Miss Jenny, "say rather, a castle in the air!"

"Well, aunt, I was spiteful enough," said Mrs. Orde, "when Lady Beauchamp boasted, at last, of this superb château in Tuscany, I think she said, to reply, 'Nay, I believe you will find it is a château en Espagne!' However, I was sorry for it, as one always is, for offending any one one has obliged; but I must own, I felt rather provoked and taken in. What she wanted me to lend, was much more than I could afford, but the humility of a person habitually insolent, is very irresistible, and she seemed so ill, so hopeless, so isolated, and so completely taken in, that I could not refuse her. She made me promise, as I had to go out, that I would take an early dinner with her, and bring aunt Jenny. Judge of my surprise, to find her, on my return, in much her usual health and spirits, very gaily dressed in her showy drawing-room—certainly as far as a silk sofa, a velvet wrapper, the twenty guinea shawl, and a good fire went,

still affecting the invalid—but with all her habitual, condescending, insolence of manner, and gradually gliding (unconsciously, perhaps), in spite of all that had passed, into boasts of her daughters' splendid matches, and pitying and disparaging prognostics about you, my love."

"I was sa disgusted wi' her, kenning as I did what yer mother had just dune for her, that I tauld her I thought, if my grond nieces mad up their minds to morry, they might at least aspire to matches as gude as their cousins—but that to my mind, woman's real triumph consisted not in the splendid matches she made, but in those she rejected; but you suld ha' seen my Leddy Beauchamp's face, and heard her shrill voice!"

At this moment Miss Jenny Macpherson's own face grew strangely and wildly distorted, and the screech upon screech, she uttered were such as could only have been expected from an insane peacock. Some extraordinary figure, wildly clad, and looking exactly like a madman escaped from Bedlam, darted across the road with a loud yell, waving a scarlet scarf before the horses' eyes. They, spirited and thoroughbred, and full of rest and corn, turned sharply round and darted off across the rocky ground at their fullest speed; Miss Jenny Macpherson and Mrs. Orde, who sat in the back seat of the phaeton, were, as the horses dashed up a steep eminence, suddenly raised aloft, and then tossed out of the carriage. Stunned by their fall, it was some time before they were aware that the terrified and maddened horses were making full speed for the cliff, which bordered on the sea. Rosalie, to whom death seemed frightfully inevitable, shrieking aloud to Jeannetta to do the same, threw herself from her seat to the ground, and lay apparently senseless, while Jeannetta still remained in her perilous position, vainly trying to rein in the furious animals, who were bearing her to a horrible and almost immediate death.

Beautiful Jeannetta! Ionian Myrrha in her battle-car, or Boadicea in her war-chariot, looked not more proudly resigned, or more poetically brave than she did in that hour of more than mortal peril! Her bonnet had come off, and was blown she knew not whither, and her black

hair all unbound, was waving in the breeze. She stood erect in the vain hope of guiding the horses better, her pale cheek, her dilated eyes, her tall form (round which her scarf fluttered), all gave her the air of an inspired heroine. She uttered no shriek, but was calmly calculating whether it would be more horrible to be dashed at once on the stony ledges they were traversing at so frightful a rate, with the chance of lingering a short time mutilated and crippled, or of meeting a certain death by being cast from the cliff into the boiling waves below. She raised her eyes as if in prayer, and with a natural instinct of self-preservation, even at such risks, was about to throw herself to the ground, with scarcely a hope, even from so terrible an alternative, when two men suddenly came from behind a projecting cliff, adroitly stopped the horses in their mad career, and enabled Jeannetta to slide unhurt from her frightful eminence.

"Where is my mother, where is Rosalie?" she cried aloud, wringing her hands, and in her terror for them, forgetting even to thank her preservers, who were judiciously endeavouring to pacify and tranquilise the frightened horses.

"Ne vous inquiétez pas, mademoiselle," said the tallest of the strangers approaching the bewildered Jeannetta, and uncovering himself as if he were addressing a queen. "Permettez-moi l'honneur de vous accompagner, pour offrir à ces dames les secours qui leur sont si nécessaires. Hyacinthe, montez, mon cher, et guidez les chevaux. Il faut nous suivre, n'entends tu pas?"

Jeannetta recognised the majestic form of the Comte de Montfaucon, and almost unconsciously accepting his offered arm, darted off in search of her mother and Rosalie.

"Ah, Dieu soit loué, les voilà!" said the count, pointing to a group consisting of Miss Jenny and Rosalie, who had just succeeded in restoring Mrs. Orde to consciousness. Rosalie was herself severely hurt, but of this she was scarcely conscious, until she had ascertained that her mother was still alive.

Miss Jenny had been stunned by her fall and terribly bruised, but not seriously injured. Mrs. Orde looked ghastly pale and strangely bewildered—for some few

minutes her terrified daughters feared some serious injury to her brain; from her excited and extraordinary manner, but recognising them with a wild cry, she burst into tears, and after an hysterical attack which lasted alarmingly long, she was able to explain that though much shaken and for some time quite stunned and senseless, she believed no bones were broken.

During this protracted and (considering the recent contusions on her head) this alarming nervous attack, the Count de Montfaucon and the Baron de Saint Felix (for it was the fair young baron who was driving) busied themselves in a thousand *petits soins*, as the French so prettily express it, with a tact and a grace of which foreigners alone are capable. By this time they were joined by the handsome Capitaine Crève-cœur. Some countrymen passing by, at their desire, took charge of the horses, while the three beaux devoted themselves entirely to the ladies. The capitaine politely bowing, smiling, and shrugging in answer to Miss Jenny's ejaculations, in which, in the broadest Scotch, she anathematized the wicked madman (sham or real) to whose sudden appearance the fright of the horses was owing, and who, she declared had returned to torment her when he saw her lying helpless and all but senseless on the ground.

"I could na see the villain's face," she said, "for a black hondkerchief tied right over it, like the block cap worn by those condemned to be honged, and which I wish he wore too, but I can swear the frightful creature was hovering about, and bending over me when I cam to mysel, and then he mad off to my niece Orde, though she, puir lassie, being stunned and senseless, was little aware she had a modmon by her side. When I saw him by her I screeched out at the vary top o' my voice, and then he mad off."

Rosalie, at the request of the foreigners, translated to them her great-aunt's somewhat incredible story, to which, as Miss Jenny angrily perceived, neither Rosalie nor her listeners gave any credence.

"Cela s'explique facilement" said the Capitaine Crève-cœur; and then, with much energy and action, he gave several instances of extraordinary hallucinations of his

own when he had been lying between life and death, wounded and stunned on the field of battle.

But a strong corroboration of Miss Jenny's story occurred when, putting her hand into her huge dimity pockets, she found her large, old, "Ladies' Polite Companion and Ready Reckoner," for 1770 (a huge leather pocket-book with silver clasps) gone—gone, too, were her gold snuff-box, her spectacles, her purse, her pin-cushion, her scissors, her huge turnip shaped gold watch, in its shagreen case—and on minute inquiry, came out what she evidently wished to conceal (but what seemed to agitate her more than anything else), an oval miniature, in a morocco case! Great was the consternation produced by this discovery; nor was it diminished by the fact ascertained, as soon as the baron's eau de Cologne and the count's vinaigrette had restored Mrs. Orde to consciousness and composure, that her reticule (she wore no pocket) was also missing!

The Capitaine Crève-cœur, however, who seemed to be one of the most sanguine and comfortable of men, felt, as he said, a moral certainty, that these articles had only been lost in the ladies' fall. He wisely advised that no outcry should be raised, which could put the countrymen upon the scent, the shades of evening closing, as he observed, around them made a search almost hopeless then, but to comfort Miss Jenny, the count produced an elegant little match box, and struck a light, and the baron took from his pocket a lanthorn, a perfect little gem, such as Titania might have used to track her Oberon's footsteps in the fairy circle. Added to this, he promised for himself and his friends, the count and the baron, to be on that very spot by daybreak, as the best and surest chance of recovering the lost treasures.

"It's na' the siller, it's na' the siller, I'm greeting after," said poor Miss Jenny partly to herself, partly to Rosalie, convulsively working her hands and feet, and rocking her body to and fro, while tears poured down her furrowed cheeks "na' na', it's na' the siller, ill as I can afford to lose my whole half-year's dividend, which I was fule eno' to carry in that pocket-buke. It's the buke itsel' which has never left me night nor day, syne my twentieth birth-day. It's the contents of thot buke—

words written by honds that are dust now—daisies gathered on that fatal day—the funeral of hope—a lock of my father's hair, the dear, dear silver hair, I'd buy it bock wi' a' the gold that's gane—his snuff-box! his spectacles! through which, gude holy mon, he so loved to read the Buke of life—a pictur—but that's idle noo—a pictur—”

And poor Miss Jenny, with her sex's weakness, mentioning that last in her speech, which, somehow, seemed to rank first in her mind, bent her head on her quivering knees, as she sate on the rocky ground, and sobbed and groaned aloud.

Vainly Rosalie (moved even to tears) tried to comfort her poor great-aunt, vainly the count, the baron, and the capitaine, reiterated their promises of being on the spot by daybreak—vainly one suggested an advertisement, another a reward, a third the crier.

“Ye ken na', ye can never ken a' I have lost,” said poor Miss Jenny, “a' that links me to the past, a' that assures me it was na' a dream, a fleeting shadow—I ha'e lost a' I volued through life, a' that was to lie in my coffin, and perish wi' me in the grave! Marvel not then that I greet! Marvel when I greet na' mair! But eno', it becomes not Macpherson's dochter to unveil her sorrows before the cold, mocking eyes of that mane, empty trifier—mon! Let them think, lassie, it's for the siller I greet. I'm thankfu' they're foreigners, and canna understand me—but, foreign or English, be sure they loe the siller weel—and wha' they ca' trash I ca' treasure, wha' they ca' treasure I count as trash—and I ha'e forgotten mysel' an' my fifty years—but in fifty mair, I'd ne'er be sic' an a fule again.”

Mrs. Orde, now somewhat restored, agreed privately with her daughters and the gentlemen, that it was better to say nothing more to Miss Jenny on the subject of her loss, but to use every possible means to recover what so priceless in her eyes, was utterly valueless in others. They all inclined to a belief that no robber was connected with the losses they had sustained; but that the violence of the fall had jerked out the contents of Miss Jenny's large pocket.

“And as for my reticule,” said Mrs. Orde, “in which

"I was silly enough to have a large sum, that must have fallen somewhere about here, unless a high wind arises, or fishermen are here before our friends, it will probably turn up to-morrow morning."

The ladies then (all but Miss Jenny) united in warmest thanks to their kind and noble deliverers. Rosalie said the most; but Jeannetta's eyes, her blushes, and her tears, had an eloquence for the count which no language could have rivalled.

The gentlemen then explained, with many complimentary allusions and self-congratulations on their supreme good fortune that they had been enjoying a sort of pic-nic among the cliffs, when the shrieks of the ladies met their ears, and that they had a fly awaiting them at no great distance; this they placed at the disposal of Mrs. Orde and her party.

All gladly accepted a place in it, save Jeannetta, who remarked that after what had passed, if she shrank from driving back on that occasion, she should never have courage to take the reins again.

Her spirit and resolution seemed to have a great effect on the foreigners, who generally admire courage in woman, as much as Englishmen do timidity. "*Avec un Anglais il faut tout craindre, avec un Français il faut tout oser!*" was shrewdly said by a fair French maximist, who studied to please both, and knew well how to succeed; and certainly the most blushing bashfulness never so charmed a French lover as did Jeannetta's Amazonian spirit, as she resumed the seat from which she had been so nearly "launched into eternity," and with flashing eyes and kindling colour, prepared to teach her fretting, champing, prancing coursers that she was their mistress still.

It was agreed then, that Rosalie, Mrs. Orde, and Miss Jenny should, escorted by the Baron de Saint Felix, fill the fly, and that the Count de Montfaucon should sit beside Jeannetta, to be at hand in case of danger, the Capitaine Crève-cœur occupying the back of the phaeton. They were all to keep as much together as possible; and after a drive which seemed long to Mrs. Orde, and interminable to Miss Jenny, but less so to Rosalie, to whom the baron devoted himself, and but a few ecstatic mo-

ments to the entranced Jeannetta, they arrived safely at home—the home as it now appeared of all, save the Capitaine Crèveœur.

Mrs. Orde, pale as she looked, and ill as she felt, kindly and hospitably invited her new friends to take their coffee with her. - The baron and the capitaine seemed eager to accept, but the count, evidently the better bred and the more polished of the three, declined so decidedly, in spite of Jeannetta's reproachful glance, that the others could not but retire.

In the course of the night, Mrs. Orde suffered so acutely in her head, and Rosalie was in such pain with a sprain in her shoulder, that it was necessary to send for a medical man; Miss Jenny, too, partly from "a bruised body," as she said, "but mair fra' a bruised speerit," was very restless. The doctor, after applying leeches to some, and embrocations to others, administered an anodyne to all, which secured them some hours' rest; Jeannetta alone, who was quite uninjured, passed a perfectly sleepless night. Her wounds were such as heal not easily, if ever—the poisoned shaft was in her heart's core. Jeannetta, why art thou sad? Is there so much anguish in FIRST LOVE?

CHAPTER X.

A FIRST VISIT.

JEANNETTA was sitting pale and thoughtful at the breakfast table alone, and thence sending tea and toast to the three sufferers by the neat-handed Phœbe Bell (her own and Rosalie's maid), when a smart, foreign laquais, whom she had not seen before, intercepted Phœbe on the stairs with a message, which Phœbe was quite unable to construe. She, therefore, ushered him into her young mistress's presence, who soon ascertained that the Count de Montfaucon and the Baron de Saint Felix were anxious to pay their respects, to make their inquiries, and to inform the ladies of the result of an early visit to the scene of the previous evening's disasters.

Jeannetta, always too prompt to decide, and too ready to act on her own unaided judgment, returned a message, importing that she alone was "visible," but should be happy to see the count and the baron, and express her own sense, and that of all her party, of the deep obligations they had incurred.

Love—mystic love!—first love—thou only magician left in these matter-of-fact days—what miracles dost thou quietly work!—what invisible yet irresistible spells are thine! Jeannetta, hitherto so self-possessed that she would have received all the kings of the earth as if she had been born a queen—Jeannetta trembles, and grows pale and red by turns, and feels her heart grow faint in her fluttering bosom. Jeannetta, hitherto, too proud to be vain, who had never felt a doubt of her beauty, or a care as to its effect—Jeannetta, like any other weak, fond woman, steals to the glass, and discontented and displeased, disorders her glossy braids in trying to improve them, and accuses the hue of her pretty muslin dress and the cut of her lace collar; nay, she has all but resolved on making a fresh toilette, when steps are heard, and Jeannetta had scarcely time to conceal her vain employment, and seat herself in dignified composure, book in hand, when Phœbe ushers in the Count de Montfaucon and the Baron de Saint Felix.

For the first time in her life Jeannetta felt awkward and shy, and blushed and hesitated, and was at a loss for words. The Count de Montfaucon, however, had that rare tact and diffusive good breeding, which knows so well how to be at ease itself, and to make others feel so too. He avoided looking at Jeannetta while her evident emotion lasted, and tried to appear quite intent on ascertaining the extent of the sufferings of her friends, and on prescribing (with an air of engrossing interest in the subject) for the bruises, sprains, and scratches of the invalids. Not so the young baron. Whether by nature more curious and lively, or less polished by education, or, perhaps, from the greater novelty to him of English people, life, and manners, we know not, but he examined Jeannetta in a manner which would have been embarrassing had she had a thought or a care to bestow on any but one. He scrutinized all about him, as an English-

man might have done the bower of some Indian queen, or North American squaw. He frequently interrupted the count to ask frivolous questions, to which he received either no answer at all, or very unsatisfactory ones; and finally, perhaps, finding himself *de trop*, and not amused by a conversation in which he had so little share, he took out of his pockets several parcels, carefully made up in embossed and scented paper of a delicate rose colour, and abundantly sealed with pale blue wax and a baronial coronet.

"These," said the count, in French, "these are the fruits of our early expedition, and if I mistake not, all that your dear aunt most values she will find here."

"Early as we were," said the baron, "and my anxiety was such I scarcely closed my eyes, some fishermen were there before us. Here are all the articles they owned to having found; there is little doubt that the money lost fell also into their hands, but there is no possibility of proving it. We only got possession of these articles by large rewards. I was so indignant at their cupidity that I set on two stalwart brutes to search them, when a whistle brought a dozen more to the spot, and though I think I could have done something, the count and Crèveœur would not let me engage against such odds!"

"It would indeed have been madness," said Jeannetta, "particularly as you had already so generously recovered all that my poor aunt really values. Let me go and gladden her heart by the restoration of these relics; I am sure the money will never cost her a tear or a pang. I will return in a few minutes, and I doubt not laden with the thanks of all."

So saying, Jeannetta hastily left the room; and though the graceful bow she made in doing so was to the Baron de Saint Felix, the timid glance which followed it was reflected in the enamoured eyes of the count.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE sight of all her treasures, of the recovery of which she had not indulged a hope, raised Miss Jenny from the depths of despair to the very summit of felicity.

"A little economy, lassie, will sune mak up for the ane, but naithing but a kind Providence could hae restored the ither. It was weel and nobly dune of the baron and the count to be on the luke out betimes, and it raises monkind in my opeenion mair than onything I've seen this fifty year. For I'm na the young bonny lassie I was then, whose smile would be a reward, but a puir broken auld woman, whom few men, Englishmen at least, would think it worth while to stir a finger to oblige; mak my best compliments to the baron and his friends, my ain Jeannetta. Tell him the recovery of these treasures will sune be followed by my thanks. I beg them to trouble themselves na mair about the siller; that's far awa by this time; but tell them they have eternally obliged Macpherson's dochter, and that Jenny Macpherson never forgets either gude or ill that's dune her!"

Jeannetta then proceeded to her mother's room, and gave her an account of what had happened. Mrs. Orde was a little startled at hearing that the elegant foreigners had actually been admitted and received by Jeannetta. But Jeannetta had that influence over her mother, which all daring and resolute spirits have over the timid and the wavering.

"I wish, my love," she said, nervously, "I wish we could have delayed receiving any attentions from these foreign noblemen till they had procured some sort of introduction to us."

"We should have thought of that last night, dear mamma," said Jeannetta, with a curling lip and a flashing eye, "when the count and the baron, at the risk of their own lives, checked the horses who were bearing me to a horrible death. Before suffering them to save me, I should have required a formal introduction, but

after they had saved my life, it would have seemed ungracious to require it."

"Nonsense, Jeannetta! You don't suppose I am such a fool as to imagine you could do otherwise than you did last night; but before encouraging any intimacy, it would be well to have some kind of introduction, surely, daughter."

"I think, mamma, we have not only some kind of introduction, but the very best kind. Last night a deed of heroism, followed by several patient acts of even Samaritan kindness, introduced these foreigners most favourably, and this morning their amiable exertions in the cause of our poor old aunt confirms my high opinion of their deserts. But with regard to intimacy, remember how decidedly the Count de Montfaucon declined your own invitation. I believe he is much too proud for there to be any fear of his intruding himself."

"Well, certainly, my love, the deeds you mention ought to be a better introduction than a few ceremonious words from some silly trifler. The count is certainly a most *distingué* looking man, and the name of Montfaucon carries great weight with it. But all eminent and noble foreigners are known to each other; and therefore, if my head is a little better to-morrow, I will write to Lady Beauchamp, and get her to make inquiries for us. If no one else can enlighten us, her daughter, the marchioness, of course will be able to do so."

"Exactly, dear mamma, and the only fear is, that Lady Beauchamp will be so jealous of our knowing a foreign nobleman so vastly superior to her made-up and wicked old son-in-law, that she will probably send you a garbled report if not some wicked calumny."

"Well, we will be on our guard against that, at any rate," said Jeannetta; "in the meantime, under such obligations as we are, and living under the same roof, you cannot avoid paying them some little attention, if only to show that you think your poor Jeannetta's life worth a dinner or a cup of tea!"

"My dearest girl," said Mrs. Orde, after a few moments' reflection, "you know, far better than I can tell you, how boundless is my gratitude to these gentlemen, how valueless, how odious life would be to me without

you, and how glad, how proud I should be to make them any return for the great benefit they have done me, any return, I say, which I could make without exposing you, and dear Rosalie, to any remarks, or any chance of inspiring or of cherishing an imprudent attachment. If the Count de Montfaucon *is* all he appears to be, and has a fortune suitable to his name and title, and a character as unexceptionable as his manners and his person, then, should he woo and win the heart of either of my daughters, I see no reasonable objection. Indeed, if Lady Beauchamp gloried in the marquis as a son-in-law, why should I set my face against a man so very much his superior in every way!"

Mrs. Orde paused for a moment, in triumph at so satisfactory a conclusion. She did not see (but probably Jeannetta did) how miserable an argument was this—No wonder the mother did not, since half the world of women, women of fashion particularly, have no stronger argument to offer in defence of the most important actions of their lives.

"Nay, dearest mamma," said Jeannetta, "it is not because a girl highly accomplished, so admirably introduced, and so exquisitely set off in every way as was Augusta Beauchamp, made a conquest of an elderly made-up marquis, that a young nobleman so elegant, so gifted, and so every way remarkable as the Count de Montfaucon, should fall in love with such mere country girls as Rosalie and myself. I should think such a man as the count might choose from among the very *élite* of the English *beau-monde*, and, indeed, it is by the merest accident that such a person is become known to us at all. In our ordinary circle of acquaintance we should never have met with him. I doubt if he is not far above Lady Beauchamp's reach, but if, through her son-in-law, she were to know such a distinguished foreigner, be sure she would take good care not to introduce him to us."

Mrs. Orde was surprised. It was not Jeannetta's wont to overrate others, or to underrate herself. Mrs. Orde's impression was, that Jeannetta thought herself a match for any aspirant, however exalted—foreign or English. She did not know how great a change had stolen over Jeannetta's spirit. She knew not how great

a leveller is first and passionate love—how it delights in exalting its object, and disparaging itself. Jeannetta's opinion, however, had its usual weight—the idea, that but for an accident they could never have been honoured by such notice as that of the Count de Montfaucon, excusable enough in a young girl so inexperienced and so much in love, was weak in a woman of the age and *usage* of Mrs. Orde. Yet she readily adopted it, and even began to fear that any delay in paying proper attention to the count and his friends might make them withdraw their august countenances.

She therefore said, "You know, Jeannetta, that I have entire faith in your discretion and judgment. I have no doubt you are quite right, and that we shall lose these valuable acquaintances if we are backward in meeting their advances. Present my best compliments, then, and invite them to dine with us to-morrow."

"To-morrow is the new young actress's benefit, when we promised to take a box."

"Well, we will dine in time for them to go with us, if I am well enough, if not, aunt Jenny, now she has all her treasures back, will be well enough to chaperone you. Go, dearest, and invite them. I will write to Lady Beauchamp all the same, that can do no harm; I will only tell her there are such foreigners here, but not that we know them. I shall beg her to inquire about them."

Jeannetta then looked in upon Rosalie, and told her of the party in contemplation. Rosalie saw that Jeannetta's eyes sparkled, and her cheeks flushed with anticipated pleasure, her woman instinct prompted a guess, which the thought of Gerard Esdaile rendered very painful.

She knew poor Gerard meditated a hurried visit *sub rosa* during term! What if he should run all sorts of risks to find Jeannetta entirely engrossed by the Count de Montfaucon, and foreigners domesticated where he for so many years had been as a son.

Rosalie knew it was Jeannetta he loved, but she loved him well enough to dread his learning that he loved now without hope. Jeannetta was too much engrossed to notice anything unusual in Rosalie's manner. She hurried down stairs, but the count and the baron were gone.

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD GENERALSHIP.

JEANNETTA was not a little surprised and mortified at finding the drawing-room empty, when she returned with her mother's flattering invitation.

"How very rude!" was her first indignant ejaculation. "How proud he must be!" was her next. "He might have waited a few minutes when I all but asked him to do so," suggested her softening heart, as a little choking sob rose in her throat. "But yet he is right, to keep up his own dignity, to have been gone a long time. That senseless discussion with mamma has lasted longer even than I imagined. She need not fear the count's being too lavish of his time and attentions. But he is quite right, I only am to blame."

As she came to this conclusion (the constant one of a woman in love) her eye fell on a scrap of paper curiously twisted and directed to herself. It merely stated in French that the Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon was sorry that the Baron de Saint Felix and himself could not await the pleasure of her return, as business of great importance claimed their immediate attention. They hoped on some future occasion to hear that the "aimable tante de mademoiselle" was satisfied with their zeal, and to receive her instructions and those of Madame Orde as to any further steps to be taken for the recovery of the money, and the punishment of the lawless depredators, who probably had found that, as well as the "articles de bijouterie et de vertu."

Jeannetta smiled at this complimentary and pompous designation of what an Englishman would have called old gimcracks. She then repaired to her mother's room to let her know how groundless were her fears of the count's intrusion, and to consult with her what was to be done to secure the "honour" of his company and that of his "distinguished friends."

How important it is for those who wish to enjoy the pride and luxury of being courted, not to make themselves too cheap. The apparent *empressement* of the

count and the baron, in calling at so early an hour, and taking such pains to be of service, had already disposed Mrs. Orde to undervalue their attentions, and to treat them *de haut en bas*. All commonplace people (and the world is full of such) value nothing but what they have some difficulty in obtaining, and even Jeannetta, whose mind was of a much loftier nature, had so much of the woman in her heart, that the count became the more dear in proportion as he made himself less cheap. The invitation to dinner, which Mrs. Orde at first had conceded as a favour to her daughter, she was now all anxiety to promote—particularly, as from the distant tone of the count's billet, she inferred that he would be in no hurry to present himself. The words, "*some future occasion*," so completely put to flight all idea that these foreigners were going to devote themselves (welcome or unwelcome) to her party, that Mrs. Orde began to doubt whether they would honour her with their company at all, and rapidly coming to the most opposite conclusions, as all people with more quickness than depth are prone to do, she informed Jeannetta that she now felt quite as sure that the count and the baron had taken their present lodgings by accident, and without reference to them. She had been convinced at first that their doing so was the result of a well-concocted plot, to win her daughters' affections. Jeannetta had her own opinion on that subject, and she kept it to herself—love was never candid—(a trickster from the beginning, and making those cunning whom nature had formed open as the day)—Jeannetta felt how much the count had gained in her mother's esteem by his apparent indifference and reserve—and what fond girl, loving for the first time, can be indifferent to the impression HE makes on a beloved mother—the place HE holds in the estimation of the whole household?

"Bring your desk here, dearest," said Mrs. Orde, "and write, in my name, as polite and elegant a French note as you can to each of the three gentlemen to whom we are so much obliged. Invite them to dinner for to-morrow, at an earlier hour than usual, and say you do so because we have a private box at the theatre, to patronise a clever and deserving young actress (whose benefit it is)

—add, that we depend on their escorting us, and returning to a *petit souper*."

Jeannetta wrote the notes—she was an elegant French scholar, for, from the age of four to eighteen, herself and Rosalie had had an accomplished French lady as governess, and a lively little Parisian soubrette, first as nursery, and then as school-room maid. Although the invitations were all written in Mrs. Orde's name, and those to the baron and the capitaine were the work of a few minutes only, Jeannetta could not please herself in that of the count. It would go to *him*—*his* eyes would dwell on it—*his* hand would hold it—*he* would perhaps guess that it was she who had written it. Several delicate sheets of note-paper were spoiled—several pens tried and cast aside, and had not Mrs. Orde insisted on sending at once, or not at all, there is no knowing when Jeannetta would have owned she was ready.

Phoebe was instructed to give the notes to the count's valet (an idle fellow who was always lounging and peering about), and by the time our party were assembled at tea, the answers were brought in. The count's was a mere formal but polite acceptance of the invitation, written in a bold hand, on thick ribbed gilt-edged paper, and sealed with a splendid coat of arms. The baron's was in a smaller, weaker hand, on pink paper, highly scented, and embossed with loves and doves, and sealed with a medallion representing Cupid chained.

The captain's note had a gay border, gold and coloured, half comic, half sporting, and his answer assumed a playful turn, while the baron's affected the sentimental; but all accepted the invitation with thanks; and even Miss Jenny, mollified towards the whole race of man, by the politeness and attentions of these three, looked forward with pleasure to meeting them again.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROSALIE'S ADMIRER.

AT about noon the next day, when Rosalie, still far from well, and becomingly attired in a little lace cap and pink cashmere wrapper, trimmed with swansdown (in which, by-the-bye, she looked like a pearl in cotton), was lying on a sofa, netting, or rather crochetting a purse, while Jeannetta was reading "Childe Harold" to her for the fiftieth time, the Baron de Saint Felix and the Capitaine Crèveœur were ushered in. They came full of smiles and bows and small-talk; and though Jeannetta looked eagerly to the door, expecting it would not close till the count had made his appearance; and though her heart sank when it did so, still she welcomed her visitors with a smile—if they were *not the rose*, like the earth, in the Persian fable, *they had dwelt near it*; and they had an importance in Jeannetta's eyes for the count's sake, which they could never have had for their own. Jeannetta used all the little art which love had so newly taught her, to lead the baron and the capitaine to talk of their absent friend, the count, and to induce them to explain his not joining, in what they evidently, with foreign politeness, seemed to consider a visit of inquiry, almost *de rigueur* "under the circumstances." But both were perfect egotists—most foreigners are—and both were a great deal too much taken up with their own charms and accomplishments to think of anything else except the ladies they wished to captivate. The baron, as we have said, young, fair, slight, with large blue eyes, and delicate complexion, affected the sentimental, and annoyed Rosalie, even while he rather amused her, by the soft earnestness of his gaze, which was fixed upon her beautiful but unusually pale face, in an adoring sort of sympathy with her sufferings, until he had succeeded in conjuring a tear into each eye, which was then hastily cast down as if in extreme confusion. His voice, too, so gently modulated, and so softly persuasive, formed a curious contrast to the loud jovial tone of the capitaine, who seemed to pique himself on his bold *bonhomme* and military frankness.

The gentlemen had brought four very beautiful little hothouse *bouquets*, one for each of the ladies. The captain, with much energy, picked out by far the finest, which he requested Jeannetta to present with "*les hommages très-respectueux du Capitaine Crève-cœur à sa charmante et adorable maman.*"

The baron then presented to Rosalie one, in which figured (among roses and geraniums) pansies, forget-me-nots, and *immortelles*. This *bouquet* was evidently intended to express a good deal, for a small sprig of cypress was in the centre, and he pointed it out, saying,—

"Unhappy emblem! it finds its way into every wreath which Hyacinthe de Saint Felix twines for beauty!"

The captain then gave Jeannetta one for "*sa digne et respectable tante;*" and, of course, the other was for her "*aimable*" self. Jeannetta smiled—she, so used to be first and foremost in every one's esteem—at being thus last and least! But it was evident the baron and the capitaine considered they had no right to make themselves too fascinating in her eyes; and Jeannetta's heart trembled as she thought that, perhaps they were aware that one whom she loved to believe they dreaded and revered, had let them know that she was the fortunate object of his individual preference.

The baron contrived to convey to Rosalie's mind, that to love and be beloved were the sole objects of his existence; that if he once found a woman capable of feeling and appreciating, of inspiring and reciprocating passion, as he understood the word—passion strong as death, and lasting as eternity—he should not pause to inquire what her birth, her fortune, her position; but should devote himself at once and for ever to her, and her alone. Should bear her to his ancestral château on the banks of the Garonne, and try to forget in that second Eden the dreary hard-working world beyond. Rosalie archly replied, that she thought both the love and the Eden were quite ideal in the present day, and that, probably, any lady with charms and accomplishments sufficient to win the Baron de Saint Felix, would not be content to bury herself in an old château on the banks of the Garonne!

"Then Hyacinthe de Saint Felix will live and die a

garçon," he said, sighing deeply, and apparently much hurt.

Tu as tort—tu as tort, mon cher," cried le Capitaine Crève-cœur. "L'amour ! oui, il n'y a que cela, pour embellir la vie ; mais l'homme ne doit pas y sacrifier l'ambition, l'intérêt, le devoir ! Aimes avec passion à la bonheur, aimes, chéris quelque chère, charmante petite épouse qui fera ton bonheur en faisant la sienne. Aimes avec raison et non avec idolâtrie ! Tu a vingt-cinq ans, et moi j'en ai trente-huit, n'est-ce pas ?—trente-huit ans bien sonnés, entends-tu ? C'est-à-dire tu as de l'imagination, moi j'ai de l'expérience. Quand tu trouves une belle à ton goût, prends tous les renseignements, vois si sa naissance, son éducation, et surtout sa fortune, vous conviennent ; cela, oui tout cela dure quand l'amour passe. Eh bien, si tout va bien, aimes-la avec tendresse, mais non avec idolâtrie. Ne vas pas t'envelir avec elle dans ton vieux château ;—non, l'amour ne survit jamais à l'ennui ! Au contraire, fais ton possible pour l'entourer des plaisirs, des ris, des jeux ; appelle à ton secours la danse, les bals, la musique, les spectacles ! Prends plaisir à la parer, à la voir briller ; une femme admirée est toujours heureuse ; une femme qui s'amuse et toujours aimable. Au reste, il faut de la beauté, de la grâce, des talents, de l'enjouement, et surtout si le mari n'est pas riche, il faut une jolie fortune et un amour raisonnable. Mais allons, mon cher ! le comte nous attend...une promenade à cheval, puis le bain, la toilette, et le bonheur de nous retrouver ici !" So saying, he caught up Jeannetta's guitar, and touching it cleverly enough, sang in a fine bass voice :—

"J'ai choisi Rose pour maîtresse :

Avec elle, je suis au mieux ;

Elle sourit de ma tendresse,

Et je n'en suis pas moins heureux.

Quand je lui dis que je l'adore,

Il faudrait voir comme elle en rit,

Moi, répond-elle, je vous abhorre.

Dans ces deux mots combien d'esprit !"

"Adieu, mesdames ! A ce soir ! à bas la passion triste, mélancolique, et...et vive l'amour gai, folâtre, enjoué ; l'une fait le malheur, l'autre le bonheur de la

vie. Mesdames, j'ai l'honneur de vous saluer ! viens, mon cher !”

So saying, he took the reluctant baron by the arm, and one, with a merry laugh which contrasted his black moustaches with his white teeth, and the other, with a die-away gaze which showed off his large eyes and parted lips—but both, probably, studied at the glass—the gentlemen withdrew. When the door was closed Rosalie and Jeannetta burst into a laugh, and exclaimed :—

“How very amusing—how thoroughly French they are !”

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS JENNY IN FULL DRESS.

EXACTLY at the appointed hour (for the French make a great virtue of punctuality) the distinguished trio were ushered into Mrs. Orde's drawing-rooms. All the ladies were assembled there, except Jeannetta. Jeannetta could not please herself at her toilet ; and the more she tried to do so, the less did she succeed.

Rosalie, on the contrary, who had given herself very little concern about her appearance, had never seemed so lovely ; and the Count de Montfaucon, as he took a seat beside her, seemed for the first time aware of her remarkable beauty. The beaux themselves were dressed to great advantage. The capitaine, as much *militaire* as his *habit bourgeois* would permit, and a good deal indebted to dress, and braid, and black velvet, all of which (whether correct or not according to the English taste) set off his handsome, daring face of ruddy bronze, with its bold features and black eyes, and his stout, military person. The Baron de Saint Felix, on the contrary, had chosen the most delicate colours and materials for his attire ; his exquisite shirt of finest cambric, with a point lace *jabot*, and tiny ruffles to match, was set off by a delicate white muslin cravat, with long ends edged with lace ; his waistcoat was of pink velvet, embroidered in silver with lilies of the valley and forget-me-nots. His coat was of the lightest

admissible shade of brown, lined with figured satin ; his very small foot had a lace stocking, and a shoe with a tiny silver buckle ; several pretty rings adorned his small fingers, a delicate chain held a miniature watch hidden in his waistcoat pocket, and a curious double pin fastened his shirt ; as he unfolded a laced handkerchief, all Arabia seemed let loose, and every separate curl of his light, glossy hair seemed to have a fragrance of its own. As for the Count de Montfaucon, he was dressed simply in the quiet, perfect taste of an English gentleman, who has a first-rate tailor. One splendid brilliant sparkled on his little finger, and a white rosebud graced his button-hole. There was nothing remarkable in his dress, but it aided the effect of his fine person and noble manner, although quite secondary : with the others the dress was the most remarkable thing, with him it was only an auxiliary.

The Capitaine Crève-cœur proceeded at once to pay devoted homage to the fair widow (Mrs. Orde herself), to lavish the most enthusiastic praises on her beauty, her talents, her virtues. The heroism she had displayed during the *horrible événement de l'autre soir*, and the amiable courage she was evincing in making an effort to do *les honneurs de sa maison*.

Mrs. Orde looked upon all this as French gallantry. Her beauty, she was aware, was considerably on the wane, and a good deal obscured by recent suffering—by a scratch on her cheek and a bruise over one eye. Her talents, she had had no opportunity of displaying, but had never piqued herself on possessing any very remarkable ones. Her virtues, she flattered herself, were not so merely superficial as to have met the captain's notice already ; and as to her noble heroism, when she remembered the length of time she was after the accident in recovering her self-possession, and how long her hysterics and nervous tremours had lasted, she felt inclined to imagine that the captain was presuming to quiz her. But the earnestness of his manner, and the impassioned devotion of his gaze, made such a supposition almost absurd. The Baron de Saint Felix threw himself on a low ottoman at Rosalie's feet, and taking out a small volume of Lamartine's poems, began to read her some of

the most touching love passages. The count found himself and his charms thrown away on Miss Jenny Macpherson, whose forehead, having been severely bruised, was partly covered with brown paper dipped in brandy (the only plaister in which she had any faith), and which, bound on by a broad black ribbon that partly covered one eye, gave a very curious and rather sinister expression to a person at all times, in appearance, antique and grotesque.

Miss Jenny, amid all the revolutions of the world of fashion, had always adhered, in a great measure, to the modes in vogue in her youth. Society would present a much more animated and varied picture were this more generally done, at least in some degree, and with certain privileges as to time. We should not then find the sex, from eighteen to eighty, arrayed in one monotonous and often most unsuitable costume; braids or ringlets would not be *de rigueur* for all ages, the flowers of spring would not disfigure the "frosty pow," gay colours and light fabrics would be resigned to those "*legères d'années et gaies de cœur*." Age would not be tortured with tight waists, or tricked out in twelve flounces; but the seasons of life, like those of the year, would be arrayed in suitable, and, therefore, graceful and becoming garb. How interesting, but how rare a spectacle, is a very old lady arrayed in something of the costume Sir Joshua has immortalized, and in which she was first told she was fair; the rich satin, velvet, or lutestring dress; the modest kerchief pinned over the venerable bosom; the black lace cloak, or grey silk mode, falling so gracefully from shoulders so well trained, that even age defies the slovenly stoop and lounging carriage which youth has adopted now; the black lace necklace, with its one row of orient pearls; the hair sprinkled with powder, and combed up under the "Brussels head" with the graceful pinners—who at eighty would not look far more dignified and picturesque thus, than screwed into a modish boddice, flounced to the waist; some little kickshaw "*bonnet, à la jolie femme*," stuck full of spring flowers; the silken curls of youth braided or waving over the furrowed brow—crinoline doing its utmost to inflate, and the whole costume so jaunty and so modern,

that nothing but that sad tell-tale, the face, announces old age?

Miss Jenny Macpherson erred (if she erred at all) in the opposite extreme, adhering so much to the fashions of her youth, or rather, the fashions her mother wore in *her* youth, as to attract attention and provoke remark,—but there was a picturesque charm in her antique costume, which no modern fashions could have had—and the count, though at first he bit his lips to avoid smiling at her appearance, owned to himself, after examining her attentively, that it was more dignified and graceful than his aged countrywomen's mania, for being dressed *à la jeune fille*. Miss Jenny's grey hair sprinkled with rose powder, was combed over a cushion, and gathered under a high cauled, Brussels-lace cap; she was very tall, and very erect, and wore a quilted pink silk petticoat, and a "gown" of flowered straw-coloured silk, a white muslin handkerchief was pinned across her bosom, and a white lace shawl was thrown over her decent shoulders; she had a handsomely-worked muslin apron, large and flowing (not the little *soubrette*-like *colifichet* of the present day), and being, out of compliment to the count and his friends, in full dress, Miss Jenny sported a blue breast-knot, a pair of quilted blue satin shoes, with high heels, a pair of diamond hoops in her ears, a diamond stomacher, a little necklace of real pearls, fixed in a quilling of black lace, and a pair of long blue kid gloves, drawn up so as to meet the Brussels-lace ruffles, depending from her elbow, and which gloves, when removed, showed the arm and hand covered with a mitten of white silk.

Miss Jenny flirted a huge fan, which represented Damon peeping at Phillis asleep on one side, with the sportive breezes more busy with her charms than one would have fancied Miss Jenny would have approved; and on the other Musidora bathing—pictures which awoke a doubt whether our forefathers were quite as delicate in some matters as their prudery in others would lead one to believe. Miss Jenny was knitting a very suspicious looking narrow strip of something, which she kept concealed in a large and antique work-bag.

Miss Jenny had not forgotten her boarding-school French, but, like Chaucer's Abbess, with her

"French of Bow,
French of Paris did she never know."

After her "Comment vous portez-vous?" (which was a great success,) she ventured on some reminiscences about the weather and the hour, which were quite unintelligible to the count, but his polite bows she answered with low and dignified curtsies. She offered him her snuff-box, and he took a pinch of snuff to oblige her, presenting his *flacon*, which she condescended to put to her nose; they then compared watches—she, producing her recovered treasure (the large gold turnip), and he, the smallest and most beautiful of tiny Genevas. This pantomime continued till the door opened, and Jeannetta at last joined the party.

CHAPTER XV.

LOVE HUMBLES THE PROUDEST

THE baron and the captain darted forward to welcome her, and to pour forth a torrent of compliments; but the count piqued, perhaps, at her long delay, only rose and bowed, and then resumed his seat by Miss Jenny. For a moment Jeannetta (haughty by nature, and piqued by this coldness) remained where she was; the next, under pretence of asking Miss Jenny how she felt, she drew near the sofa on which her aunt and the count were seated, and, of course, common politeness compelled him to make room for her. By what invisible yet irresistible impulse wert thou led, oh, once proud Jeannetta! What instinct teaches thy lover (for such his looks proclaim him) how to woo thee, sitting spell-bound by his side, so gently observant, and so meekly admiring, art thou not a marvel to thyself, oh, Jeannetta!

Having compelled his proud and beautiful conquest to make this marked advance, the count exerted himself to the utmost to repay her for the sacrifice. In deep and low, but most impassioned language, he, without com-

promising himself, or her, by any direct allusion, enlarged on the power of first impressions, and the magic influence that does exist even in these matter-of-fact days under the name of "Love at first sight." He painted in glowing colours, a woman such as Jeannetta felt he believed her to be, and the love such a being should both feel and inspire, even for, and in, an object so little deserving; namely, the man who had no merit but his passionate and devoted love.

"A man," he said, "not even amiable, cheerful, open; but perhaps, harsh, proud, cold, to all but one—the prey to dark and stormy passions—rash, vindictive, envious to agony of anything she admired, jealous to madness of every object of her innocent love, and capable of criminal violence at the slightest preference shown to another."

Jeannetta listened with pale cheek and lips apart; the gloomy picture, far from revolting, captivated her fancy; and, indeed, the count while appearing to accuse himself so bitterly had taken good care only to acknowledge those grand, those inscrutable and terrific passions which lend an awe and a mystery to the love of a proud and romantic woman, which give so wild a charm to Lara and the Corsair, and make Byron (spite of so much to shock their prejudices) the favourite poet of even the purest of the sex.

Dinner was announced while the count sat gazing into Jeannetta's beautiful face; and while she pondered in her trembling heart his strange and mystic words.

The count gave an arm to Miss Jenny Macpherson, and another to Jeannetta. The captain led Mrs. Orde, who (oh, vanity! oh, weakness!) by this time was flushed with a vague feeling of pleasure at compliments and attentions to which for twenty years she had been a stranger. Jeannetta was far too much engrossed to notice anything but the count; but Rosalie, whose thoughts were with poor Gerard Esdaile, and who hated to see these foreigners admitted to privileges which once had been his alone, and which, with her good will, no other should ever enjoy. Rosalie saw with indignant surprise, tinged with a sense of the ridiculous, which as a daughter she struggled to suppress, that her mother, generally so quiet and unaffected in her behaviour, was actually

assuming a sort of girlish affectation of manner. Once or twice she almost feared she had intercepted a coquetish glance, and she saw with shame and sorrow that Mrs. Orde, generally the least vain of pretty women of a certain age, took a deliberate survey of herself in the pier glass as she passed it, leaning on the captain's arm, and smiled encouragingly in his face as he whispered something about the brave and the fair, and how well a "blonde aux yeux bleus" looked on the arm of "un militaire avec le teint basané, au traits prononcés, à la figure mâle et aux moustaches noirs." Poor Rosalie! after this she could scarcely answer with ordinary civility when the Capitaine Crève-cœur addressed any of his somewhat fulsome, personal compliments to herself. It was so startling to her, to see her mother, her dear, unaffected, simple-minded, affectionate mother, in so new and derogatory a light, to be forced to perceive that any coxcomb, a foreigner particularly, and one so slightly and so recently known, should have the power of making her sweet and respectable mother ridiculous. How ashamed would she feel were this flirtation (for such it was fast becoming) carried on in the presence of Gerard Esdaile, and his humorous, shrewd, and jocose, but darling old father; Gerard, too, had such a keen sense of the ridiculous. He was always so severe on coquetry and affectation even in the young, what would he think of it in a woman of her mother's age? and he had always so loved and respected her mother; his affection and deference for that kind parent had been one of the great links between them. Where, too, might not this folly lead? Mrs. Orde, generally so much more occupied with her daughters than with herself, had scarcely looked at Rosalie or Jeannetta since this hateful evening began. Once, indeed, when the bold captain was presuming to detain Mrs. Orde's hand, under pretence of examining a beautiful ring, but paying at the same time a *sotto voce* compliment to *la belle main de madame*, Mrs. Orde, actually blushing as she withdrew it, encountered a reproachful look from Rosalie, which look she answered with a somewhat angry glance of defiance, and a toss of the head. Never before had that mother and daughter exchanged such a look; and tears rose to Rosa-

lie's eyes, the first tears of hers her mother had ever disregarded.

The Baron de Saint Felix meanwhile was laying close siege to Rosalie's heart, but so irritated was she at her mother's coquetry with the captain, and her sister's evident devotion to his friend the count, that she could scarcely control herself sufficiently not to be positively rude to her own admirer.

He soon decided that she was "*comme la plupart des Anglaises, d'un caractere bizarre, inégal, capricieux, mais tout de même,*" he had his own reasons for determining to win her, and all gentle, patient, and amiable as he seemed, he ground his teeth at each new rebuff, and inwardly murmured "*plus tard ce sera mon tour.*"

CHAPTER XVI.

GERARD ESDAILE.

AFTER dinner the ladies tried to persuade their beaux to adopt the English fashion, and remain at table till they summoned them to tea and coffee. The captain, who, emboldened by success, was growing every moment more forward and presuming, positively refused to accede, and was supported by the Baron de Saint Felix in his ill-bred defiance of the customs of the country and of his hostess's house. The count, who was far more polished than either, showed a great inclination to obey the ladies. But finding, for the first time, his frown and his haughty disapproval lost on the triumphant and inflated capitaine, he murmured a touching apology in Jeannetta's ear, and escorted her back to the drawing-room.

Here the captain, uninvited, sat down to the piano, played with a bold touch, a martial air or two, and then twirling his moustaches, and fixing his bold, black eyes on Mrs. Orde, who stood beside him, began in a fine bass voice,

"*Ma mie, ma douce amie,
Reponds à mes amours;
Fidèle à cette belle
Je l'aimerai toujours;*"

with about a dozen similar stanzas, all sung in the same gallant and pointed manner, did le capitaine captivate Mrs. Orde and annoy poor Rosalie.

By this time the beautiful moon, "riding near her highest noon," was to be seen from the balcony, silvering the whole expanse of darkest azure spread below, and making every ripple shine and smile.

Almost unconsciously, Jeannetta allowed the count to throw over her a scarlet cashmere of her mother's, which that lady had tossed off as dowdy (in a novel anxiety to show off her figure), almost unconsciously, too, she found herself beside him on the balcony; silently they stood for some time, looking first on the sea, then on the moon; then their glances met, and the eyes of both glistened with tears. Jeannetta trembled, and the count sighed. He stole her hand and she did not withdraw it; he pressed it to his lips, and meekly her once proud head sank on his shoulder.

"Oh, Jeannetta! be mine, mine only, mine for ever!" he murmured. "I am every way unworthy of thee, and dark clouds hang over me, and a sad mystery envelopes my fate, but if you love me (as those tears proclaim) you must love me as I am, nor seek to raise the veil, nor care to know aught, but that whatever I may have been to others, I am true to thee! Art thou capable, oh Jeannetta, of a love like this?"

"I am!" she whispered, and as he drew her to his bosom, in a long and wild embrace, Rosalie called from the tea-table "Jeannetta, Jeannetta! where are you, hear is dear Gerard Esdaile! come and welcome him."

Welcome him! poor Gerard! Oh, what a welcome was this, after the risks he had run, the perils he had encountered, the ruin he had braved. Jeannetta, with that wild lustre in her eyes, and that celestial flush upon her cheek, which only happy love in its rosy morning can bestow, Jeannetta drawing aside the crimson curtain, which the count had contrived (unseen) to close after them, and which had given the sanctity of a tête-à-tête, to their long moonlit interview, Jeannetta looking like Aurora led by dark night, stepped from the balcony into the room, and stood in beauty increased tenfold by her

sweet emotion, before the man who had loved her all his life, but who adored, who idolized her now.

"How do you do, dear Gerard?" she said, kindly offering her warm hand, and smiling in his ghastly, agitated face.

"I am quite well I thank you, Jeannetta, Miss Orde—I mean—"

"Oh you are not at all well, dear Gerard, you mean," said Rosalie. "You are cold and weary, and, I dare say, famished. Come you must sit by me, on this sofa, and no one shall talk to you, or look at you, till you have had at least three cups of tea and three muffins."

Gerard smiled, a grave and absent smile, but he suffered Rosalie's warm hand to lead him to the seat beside her, and his eye followed Jeannetta and the count with the glassy stare of a somnambulist in a troubled dream.

"I fear you are not at all well, my dear boy!" said Mrs. Orde, approaching him, natural kindness and the auld lang syne prevailing over her assumed coquetry and over the jealous influence of the captain.

These kind words proved very nearly too much for the wretched young man, and very nearly had he, to the disgrace of English manhood, and to his own eternal anguish and regret, burst into passionate tears before the three foreigners, who were exchanging indignant, scrutinizing, and sarcastic glances, and who evidently considered Gerard (who from his cradle had been quite one of the family) as an impertinent intruder. But an effort, such perhaps as nothing but English pride and English resolution could make, enabled Gerard to master his almost hysterical anguish, and to reply with a firm voice, and a sort of smile:—

"Oh, I am quite well, dear mamma, I thank you; but I have had a very fatiguing and perilous journey; I will tell you all about it presently, just now I can only say, that I am here at the risk of expulsion, because I saw in the papers an account of a horrible attack made upon you by some ruffians, and I could not rest without coming myself to see whether you were injured, and, if possible, getting the cowardly miscreants punished."

The three foreigners evidently understood enough of

this speech to be rather displeased at it, and they exchanged angry and scornful glances.

"I am *very, very*, much obliged to you, dear Gerard," said Mrs. Orde, "and so I am sure are the girls; but the 'bane and antidote' grew side by side, and the very accident which had so nearly proved fatal to us all, introduced these three kind and noble gentlemen, to whom we all owe, more than we can ever pay, and Jeannetta her life."

Not noticing that, at her last assertion, Gerard's very lips grew white, Mrs. Orde added:—

"Let me, then, introduce to my dear adopted son our three deliverers!"

So saying, she waved her hand and bowed as she named: Le Comte Gonzalve de Montfaucon—Le Baron de Saint Felix—et le Capitaine Crèveccœur—(last but not least in the fair widow's estimation).

Though his knees shook, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, Gerard Esdaile rose to return, as cordially as he could, the salutations of the three detested, and, to his taste, detestable foreigners whom Mrs. Orde smilingly named, presenting Gerard to them in return as "son fils adoptif, son cher Gerard Esdaile." Although poor Gerard would much sooner have grasped a toad, or even a scorpion, than his rival's white hand, he was, in common courtesy, compelled to take what the count imagined the customs of the country compelled him (reluctantly enough) to offer. The baron, too, extended his hand, which, though not very welcome, it was not such torture to Gerard to touch; but le Capitaine Crèveccœur, on hearing Gerard named as Mrs. Orde's *fils adoptif*, rushed forward with well-assumed warmth and military frankness, and catching Gerard in his arms hugged him up in a close embrace, at the same time kissing him with his rough whiskered lips, first on one cheek and then on the other.

Disgusting as this truly French embrace was to the reserved, dignified, and alas! most miserable Englishman, there was something in it, perpetrated as it was so suddenly, and so completely against his will, which acted upon Gerard's excited nerves and compelled him to laugh aloud.

"A la bonne heure," said the good-natured Crèveccœur.

"Soyons gais, amusons-nous! les amis de mes amis sont mes amis; le fils adoptif de Madame Orde devient mon enfant chéri."

At the idea of being *l'enfant chéri* of the great French humbug before him (as Gerard inwardly designated the capitaine) his fit of laughter returned.

The foreigners exchanged glances, which seemed to say that the poor young man was evidently to be pitied as a person of weak intellect, and that they had nothing in any way to apprehend from such a *niais*; they little dreamed that on that very young man, trembling with passion even while he laughed aloud in his nervous excitability, the eyes of a whole university were fixed. They little dreamed, proud as they were of a little smattering of knowledge, that he had already drunk deep at the very well-spring of erudition—that a double first class was said to await him at the approaching examination, and that the passion for Jeannetta, which they detected, looking upon it as the love of a half-witted boy, had been for years the mighty power which had led him on from one success to another, from triumph to triumph—which had kept him pure and spotless in the midst of temptation—taught him to consume the rosy hours of youth and early manhood immured in his small college rooms, unconscious of the flight of time—the morning sun and the midnight lamp finding him alike bending over books, the mastery of which he fancied (poor fool!) would win him Jeannetta's love. Alas! how secondary, in his opinion, were the college honours and his father's deep and proud delight—woman so loved—the powerful!—and what power like that of knowledge!—what conquests like those bloodless conquests over the realms of thought?—what sacrifices like those of all selfish pleasures, all enticing delights, and even all innocent amusements, to devote the whole energies of his soul to acquiring that fame which would win her love.

Ah! while his young companions, having vainly tried persuasion, raillery, ridicule even, left him on some lovely morn alone in his dark rooms, while they rowed delighted on the azure Isis, or revelled in some exhilarating and manly sport—how, if for a moment nature spoke,

and almost persuaded him to go forth and enjoy his young existence, how would the dread of failure and losing Jeannetta sweep across his mind—drive him back to his weary task—renew his energies and rekindle his zeal—and keep him chained, a mental galley slave, till his young companions came back from their day of pleasure, joyous in their ignorance and loud in their folly, and saw his pale, classic face bending, lighted by a solitary lamp, at the very same window where they had seen it when the morning sun looked in to invite him abroad.

"And how did you get leave to come and see us, Gerard," said Rosalie, who thought there was something hollow and unnatural in Gerard's laugh, and longed to put a stop to it.

"Leave," he answered; "oh, I had no leave, Rosalie; I could not get leave."

"And yet you came; oh, Gerard, what a risk!"

"A risk, indeed," he said, and laughed again; "if discovered I shall be expelled."

"Oh, Gerard, how can you laugh? think of your father—why, your expulsion would be death to him."

"Ah, there, Rosalie, you strike the only chord to which there is any response in my heart. My poor father! It would, indeed, be a bad return for all his laborious and vigilant care; and that, too, after all the success he has anticipated for me, and the living which my uncle makes dependent on my taking the highest honours."

"Oh, Gerard," said Rosalie, with tears in her eyes, and involuntarily clasping her hands; "I am quite certain that it is madness for you to stop here an hour, nay a moment longer. Oh! do you not remember poor Albert Dysart; think of his great promise—think of his sad downfall—his miserable disgrace."

"His happy end," said Gerard.

"Happy?"

"Yes; for all was soon over."

"His father's broken heart."

"He did not live to see him die."

"No; but he lived to cause his death."

"Rosalie, you speak of things you do not understand. Albert Dysart was, as you say, good and gifted, the

pride of his college, and the glory of his father. He was sure of his 'first,' of a fellowship, and a good living; just before he was to go into the schools, the woman he adored heartlessly jilted him. He could not, he would not, believe her false. He applied for leave to go for a day or two—a request, I grant, unheard of at such a time. It was refused: he set off in defiance of the authorities. He found his intended sporting with her new lover; he went home; he found a letter announcing his expulsion; he returned to the house of his ladye love—it was evening. She was about to open a ball with her affianced, ha! ha! ha! I have heard she was in high beauty and joyous spirits, crowned with roses, and robed in white, a bride elect—love in her eyes—women look so heavenly when they love, Rosalie. But she did not look thus long; she turned pale enough when she saw Albert Dysart standing before her; she was paler still when, the next moment, putting a pistol to his temple, he shot himself, and fell dead at her feet. Oh, it was a noble revenge, and his was a happy end. He made her a world's wonder for cruelty and faithlessness. Her new lover had no wish for one with murder on her soul. Her health gave way, her beauty faded, her affianced forsook, she pines a miserable wreck, and Albert is not unavenged in his bloody grave."

"Avenged, oh, Gerard! deeply as I own that he was wronged, for he was her accepted suitor, could the misery of her he loved so wildly appease his spirit, were it conscious of her fate—can love, however outraged, rejoice in the loved one's ruin; ah, to my mind, Albert Dysart's was a rash, a cruel, and a selfish deed. His father's death, his mother's madness, and his poor faithless Eveleen's misery; all these, to gratify a vile revenge, has he secured, and perhaps added to all an eternity of anguish for his own guilty soul, and you dare to call that noble—and his end a happy end!"

"Rosalie, you never loved," whispered Gerard, "or you would feel for poor Dysart."

Never loved! How blind, how selfish, does passion make us! Never loved! poor Rosalie! And yet she would gladly die any guiltless death to see Gerard Eddale once again the proud, the calm, and happy being she had known

him till this evening. Never loved! when her very heart seems full of tears, and her cheek changes with every tone and look of his! Yes, Rosalie loves with woman's purest, best, and most unselfish devotion—

“Her unrequited tenderness
Living on its own sweet excess.”

“But enough of poor Albert Dysart,” she said; “whatever you may advance to tease your old friend Rosalie, I know you condemn his selfish sacrifice of those who so loved him. And now, dear Gerard, take warning, I implore you, if not by his fate, by that he entailed on his devoted parents, and hasten back to Oxford before your absence is discovered, and your disgrace is death to your dear and excellent father. Jeannetta,” she said (Jeannetta, alas! was listening to the count's impassioned account of what he had felt on first beholding her)—“Jeannetta! Gerard, by his mad freak in coming here to-night, risks disgrace, expulsion, ruin. Come and add your prayers to mine that he will return at once; if he sets off directly, his absence may not be noticed—oh! come and beg him to go.”

Jeannetta, not much pleased at the interruption of a confession which filled her heart with the wildest ecstasy, rose, and drew near Gerard—but it was in a cold and absent manner: she urged him to return, and, as she spoke, the carriage drove to the door, and Mrs. Orde, who had been out of the room, returned, cloaked and hooded.

“We are going to the play, Gerard,” she said; “will you come with us, and return to a *petit souper* here?”

Rosalie, with tears in her eyes, whispered—

“Oh, do not, Gerard, do not.”

“Do not run any risk, Gerard,” said Jeannetta, as she accepted the aid of the Count de Montfaucon in putting on her shawl, which he did in a manner which was torture to poor Gerard, folding it over her with lingering tenderness, and almost a gentle embrace; “think of dear old Doctor Esdaile,” she added almost absently, as, taking the count's arm, she met and returned his ardent gaze. “He would never get over a disappointment in your

college career. So do go back like a good boy. Come, I must insist, and say farewell."

"I am much obliged to you," replied Gerard, bitterly, "but I am resolved to see the play—*vive la bagatelle!* I would risk something for one happy evening with such dear, kind, old friends. Rosalie, will you take my arm?"

The baron at that very moment was offering his, but Rosalie took poor Gerard's with so marked a preference that the baron sighed and drew back.

CHAPTER XVII.

WOMAN'S SYMPATHY.

ROSALIE had all a woman's tact, and she felt it was no time to show pique or resentment at Gerard's defiance of her opinion and contempt of her advice, when the deadly pallor of his cheeks, the quiver of his lips, and the strange fire in his eyes announced an excess of mental anguish almost unbearable. Much as her pride in him she loved made her dread his exposing himself in any way before the watchful and mocking foreigners around him, she almost prayed that tears would come, to the relief of his bursting heart, when they found themselves in temporary obscurity as they drove to the theatre. But jealousy (in its first stage at least) is a burning, scorching, maddening passion; and Gerard, as Jeannetta and Mrs. Orde made room for the count between them, and he heard them whisper softly together, Gerard felt more inclined to laugh aloud and grapple with his rival in a death struggle than to shed any soft, refreshing tears on the gentle bosom that would have gladly received them.

The Baron de Saint Felix was piqued and sulky at Rosalie's evident preference of Gerard; but his was the jealousy of vanity, not of love. The Captain Crèveœur was indignant, because, in spite of his great progress in Mrs. Orde's good graces, no room had been made for him in the carriage that conveyed the ladies. Rosalie, with unwonted energy, had insisted on Gerard's sitting between her and Miss Jenny Macpherson, and the count had been

invited by Jeannetta to the place between herself and mother. The family coach (roomy as it was) could hold no more, and the capitaine and the baron found themselves left to their own resources as to the ways and means of getting conveyed to the theatre. Much too showily and daintily attired for walking, they had to wait while a fly was sent for, and they beguiled the time by violent abuse of Gerard, and sarcastic and disparaging comments on "les Anglaises."

"Montfaucon," said the captain, "seems pretty sure of *his* prize, and I have little doubt of mine. I shall make short work of it, I promise you, with the mamma; she has no time to lose; but you, Saint Felix, yours is a desperate case, I fear. Would you have dreamt of this great booby springing up to put your nose out of joint! Only think of that sprightly, beautiful little blonde, who, to my taste, is a thousand times lovelier than her stately Semiramide of a sister, and who seemed the very soul of mirth and joy, being over head and ears in love with that great noodle—half madman, half idiot, I take it."

"Well, the love is all on her side," said the baron, with a spiteful triumph; "he is evidently dying for the haughty Jeannetta; and I am glad of it, as I owe *la petite* Rosalie many a grudge for her slights to me this evening; but, whatever her partialities may be, she is, or rather shall be, mine. And the less she loves me, and the more trouble she gives me, the more will I make her rue it when my turn comes. If Montfaucon weds Jeannetta, and you marry the mother, opportunity cannot be wanting for me to secure this girl. If coaxing and canting won't do, I'll try intimidation—pretend to commit suicide, or some such clap-trap, and if that fails (and I see the girl has a deuce of a spirit, and defies and even dislikes me, of course, owing to her infatuation for this English lover), I'll take the liberty of carrying her off by force, and compelling her to marry me."

With this and similar discussions carried on in rapid and vehement French, the gentle, sentimental baron, and the capitaine who so piqued himself on his frankness and *bonhomie*, beguiled the way till they arrived at the theatre, when the Baron de Saint Felix threw a tender and reproachful langour into the large blue eyes he had

the art of moistening with tears at will, and where the Capitaine Crèveœur smoothed his ruffled brow, twirled his black moustaches, and met Mrs. Orde's admiring gaze with the most frank and winning smile that ever displayed a set of dazzling teeth.

The play—"Romeo and Juliet"—had not begun when our party entered, and took possession of one of the stage boxes, the other being filled by a dashing set of officers of the — Dragoons, then quartered at Brighton. The beauty of the Misses Orde, and the showy air of their foreign attendants, with the elegance of Mrs. Orde and the antique oddity of Miss Jenny, attracted a great deal of attention in the officers' box.

There was an air and manner so very distinguished about the count, in addition to his remarkable beauty of form and face, and Gerard Esdaile was so unmistakeably an English gentleman, that the experienced eyes of the elder of the officers were fixed in amaze at their appearance in close intimacy with the captain and the baron, whose exterior they considered of a very equivocal nature.

Men very easily and quickly perceive anything questionable or *de mauvais ton* in other men; and it soon became evident to all our party and even to themselves that the showy little Baron de Saint Felix and the military Capitaine Crèveœur were the objects of a scrutiny in their opposite neighbours which seemed far from flattering.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CELUI QU'ON AIME.

THE most distinguished-looking and the handsomest of the officers, whose opera-glasses were levelled at Mrs. Orde's box, was the colonel of the regiment, the Honourable Harcourt Pevensy, son of the late, and brother of the present Earl of Chester. Although bordering on forty years of age, his fine figure, his noble features, and his truly aristocratic air, gave him an immense superiority even over the handsomest of his subalterns, in the

first bloom of their manhood. If any fault could be found in a face whose Plantagenet nose, eagle eye, and chiselled mouth and chin, were universally considered masterpieces of manly beauty, it was in an expression occasionally haughty and sarcastic, but which, as with all thorough-bred and intellectual people, he could soften at will into the sweetest condescension and most endearing amiability. It was, perhaps, the recognising something of his own cast of features and character of expression in the Count de Montfaucon, which caused him to examine that gentleman with so minute and protracted a scrutiny. There certainly was a curious resemblance between them, although Colonel Pevensey's closely curled hair, whiskers, and moustaches, were of a bright chestnut, his large eyes of a rich blue, and his complexion so fair that with any less noble features, less resolute expression, and less commanding figure, he would have been, perhaps, subjected to the charge of effeminacy.

Colonel Pevensey had seen as much service as the peaceful times he lived in would allow. He had been in early youth severely wounded in a bloody engagement with the brutal Kaffirs, and he had spent twelve years in India, where he had seen much perilous service, and acquired a great deal of military skill and military glory. He was brave even to rashness, and resolute even to obstinacy—an ultra-disciplinarian, and a rigid martinet. Among many faults laid, somewhat lightly, to his charge, such as gallantry, inconstancy, and heartlessness, one more serious and which seemed better founded was a severity of military discipline amounting to cruelty: even the marvellous perfection and discipline of his well-tried troops did not exonerate him, in public opinion, for his persevering addiction to the lash—nor excuse the horrible fact, that three unfortunates, two abroad and one in England, had died in consequence of the severity of military flogging inflicted by his authority, and in his presence.

His brother, the Earl of Chester, had been married many years, but had no family. Colonel Pevensey himself was a widower; he had been married twice, and by his first marriage, with a high-born but penniless beauty, he had two children, a boy and a girl, lovelier than any-

thing yet seen, even among those loveliest of created beings, the children of our aristocracy.

The youngest of these children, a boy six years old, was likely, ultimately, to inherit the ancient title and estates of his childless uncle. By his second marriage Colonel Pevensey had secured some two hundred thousand pounds, and a young and handsome widow—report said, that the colonel and his second wife quarrelled bitterly. She bore him no children, and was horribly jealous of his love for those cherubs his first wife had left him: to console herself she took (like so many women of fashion) to an inveterate, excessive, and private habit of drinking. The colonel's indifference soon, of course, grew, under this provocation, into disgust, and the premature end her excesses brought on, was a relief to both the hated wife and the loathing husband. Colonel Pevensey, so well born, so renowned in arms, so wealthy, with such a fair chance of so noble a title, and so remarkably handsome, had been, of course, at two-and-thirty, not merely a desirable match for the proudest and loveliest, but a perfect idol among the very *élite* of the female aristocracy.

It is a curious fact that sternness and manliness of character, even if carried to excess, have a much greater power over woman's mind than the most amiable virtues of a softer nature, so that the most lovely and timid of girls loved him none the less for the severity and even cruelty with which he was taxed. A sort of mysterious awe enhanced the passion his beauties of mind and person repeatedly inspired. The most brilliant advances were made to him, the most flattering preferences were betrayed, but in vain. Report did not acquit him of many romantic love affairs; but he seemed quite weary of wedlock, and several years which had passed since the death of his second wife, began to convince even the most sanguine, that he would never give his beautiful children a new mamma.

Gerard Esdaile had truly said and deeply felt that woman never looks so beautiful as when she loves. The soul, the mind, the heart of a beautiful girl really in love for the first time, all seem to unite to illumine her, as it were, from within and without, till she almost seems

some delicate and heavenly transparency; there is so wild and soft a rapture in her eyes, so varying and celestial a rose upon her cheek, so ethereal an air, so proud and yet so timid a carriage!—and it was seen thus, in the very dawn of passion (the aurora of the heart), bathed in the purple light of love, that Colonel Pevensey beheld Jeannetta for the first time! So flattered, so courted, so admired, and so brilliant a match in every respect, was Colonel Pevensey, that he had little doubt of the joyful acceptance of the lovely girl before him, even if, as he already suspected, the handsome foreigner by her side had made some slight impression on her youthful fancy. He had all a genuine Englishman's contempt of a foreigner, for a rival. He did not recognise in the Count de Montfaucon any one of the ambassadors or distinguished *habitues* of Her Majesty's drawing-rooms, levees, or balls. He felt quite sure of eclipsing him whenever he chose to obtain an introduction, and in the meantime, with true British *nonchalance*, he threw himself back in his *fauteuil*, amusing himself with watching the count and Jeannetta with an air of unconcern, and set some of his officers to ascertain who and what were "all those odd people in the opposite box. Foreigners and all!"

While they were thus engaged, the curtain rose.

It was the *début* (at least on the Brighton stage) of a young actress, announced in the play-bills as Miss Violante Woodhurst.

A good deal of interest had been excited about this young lady, owing to repeated delays in her appearance, caused by a severe cold and dangerous fever, which she had caught in a manner which rendered her at once an object of public admiration and esteem.

On the very evening of her arrival at Brighton, the same on which she was to have appeared as *Pauline*, in the "Lady of Lyons," and while she was dressing to go to the theatre, a child in the scarlet fever, left by a drunken mother, gone in search of more gin, and who inhabited a little room at the other end of the inn-yard, accidentally set fire to the curtains of its bed; Miss Woodhurst, standing at her own window, repeating her part with trembling anxiety about her success, perceived

the accident, and caught sight of the wretched child tossing its arms aloft in terror and despair. Her own room was on the ground-floor, and without a moment's delay she sprang through the open window, calling loudly as she went for help; as she passed the pump in the yard, she seized a bucket of water (providentially at hand), and reached the little sufferer's room, just as its night-gown and an old shawl in which it was wrapped had caught fire; with the water from the bucket the brave girl extinguished the flames, and catching the little invalid in her arms, came forth with her, just as the alarm was given, and the yard filling with people, too terrified to act.

Having saved the child, the young actress, with great presence of mind, directed, urged, insisted, and at last succeeded in getting engines sent for, buckets of water used, and the fire put out.

But her agitation was so great, and when all was over, she found herself so chilled by exposure, being at first only half-dressed, and finally wetted to the skin, that swoons and hysterics succeeded each other so rapidly, her performing that night was pronounced, by a medical man, to be quite impossible; and the manager reluctantly substituted another play.

Being, however, a man of ready wit and much tact, he thought he perceived a good opportunity with an English audience (always on virtue's side) to excite a feeling of interest for the young *débutante*, and to secure her an enthusiastic reception, when she did appear.

He therefore came before the curtain, and in very appropriate and eloquent language, expressed his deep regret, that the *début* of a very young and very beautiful lady of extraordinary promise, was unavoidably postponed.

A murmur of disapprobation was heard; the manager waited a few minutes, and then said:—

"I have been the servant of an English public too long, and I know the heart of an English audience too well, not to feel a triumphant certainty, that when I have explained the cause of Miss Violante Woodhurst's absence, you will rise as one man to honour and applaud her."

He then, in as brief and succinct a manner as possible,

described the accident; her heroic rescue of the child, at the risk of her own life; the energetic and brave exertions of her master spirit, until the fire was extinguished; the result of the cold and the immersion on her delicate, half-clad form, and of the excitement and the child's peril, on her brave, but feeling heart.

"And now," he said, "I leave the cause of this young girl in your hands; and I have known an English audience, from infancy to middle age, imperfectly indeed, if I have not the pride and consolation of telling her that she has won more laurels and more golden opinions by this brave deed, than she could have done, even by her matchless personification of the sweet Pauline. I believe you will empower me to inform her, that when she does appear, she will be the more welcome for a delay like this, and you will judge as indulgently as you can, of the entertainment I have hastily, but I hope not injudiciously, substituted."

Mr. Merryweather, the manager, was right.

Before he had quite concluded his address, the whole house rose in a tumult of enthusiasm.

Violante Woodhurst's name was echoed and re-echoed, with cheer upon cheer, hurrah upon hurrah, until the audience were hoarse—men waved their hats and ladies their handkerchiefs—the bouquets intended for the actress were flung to the manager, to be borne by him as tributes of respect and good-will to the woman.

A dull opera was listened to with perfect good-humour. A long account of the whole affair, address and all, much embellished, appeared in both the Brighton newspapers. The third-rate inn, where Violante Woodhurst lay, was besieged by kind inquirers of every class, and the answer given was, that the young actress had caught the scarlet fever of the child she had saved, and that her recovery was considered very doubtful.

It was more than a month before she was sufficiently restored to make her *début*; in the meantime, to support her expenses, and to keep her alive in the public interest, Mr. Merryweather had, at the suggestion of some benevolent patrons of the theatre, allowed her, though still absent, a benefit night, which was crowded to excess, and realized a handsome sum.

And now, exquisitely dressed, conscious of popularity, and trembling with a thousand sweet and new emotions, Violante Woodhurst appeared before a house crammed to the very ceiling; and as the shouts and clamours of applause met her from all sides when her young and lovely person first appeared, she, with an emotion graceful and touching, because genuine and spontaneous, covered her face with her hands and wept.

Recovering her composure during the tumultuous applause which her grace and beauty increased tenfold, Violante Woodhurst, led forward by the good-humoured manager, made several low and graceful curtsies to the audience, with her hand pressed upon her bosom, to express at once her agitation and her gratitude. As she came forth, and the full light fell upon her face and form, an exclamation of surprise burst from Mrs. Orde and her daughters, and the former whispered:—

“Good heavens! it is Violet Woodville!”

The girls, amazed and but half-convinced, waited till they had heard her sweet voice and ringing laugh in colloquy with Lady Capulet and the Nurse, and then both agreed, that it must indeed be Violet Woodville, for that it was more likely their little village playmate should have grown and ripened into so much beauty, than that any other person should have the arch glance, the peculiar smile, and the sweet clear voice of Violet. The similarity of the name too confirmed their conviction (changed only enough to escape observation). Violet's mysterious disappearance, long a source of anxiety and alarm, was now explained; and while the young actress, far too much engrossed by her part, and with the magic of genius so identifying herself with Juliet, that she distinguishes no one among the audience, goes through that most exquisite love-scene in our language—the meeting with Romeo in her father's garden—we will rapidly recount what we know of her history, and its connexion with Mrs. Orde and her daughters.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SQUIRE.

THE Woodvilles were a family of great claims to antiquity, but of very small means; having always ranked as gentry, they were too proud to embark in trade, agriculture, or any other means of increasing their very slender resources. The house they lived in, very low, rambling, and dilapidated, had been a manor-house. For many centuries it had been in the possession of the ancestors of the present occupants; but formerly broad lands and good farms had formed part of the property, and enabled the Woodvilles of the olden time to keep the place up, to live in good style, and to mix with the society of the country round. Families seldom, if ever, remain at a stand-still: either they are rising, money-getting, thrifty people, adding gradually acre to acre and hundred to hundred; or they are a sinking, money-spending, wasteful race, and losing field after field, and hundred after hundred, till often the descendants of a line of proud squires, who owned and gave their name to village or to hamlet, are to be found (if industriously traced out) in the "sons of the soil," tilling for hire the very land their forefathers held as lords—nothing left of their former grandeur but a vague tradition, growing fainter and fainter, while their very name (as if ashamed of its degradation) is glad to conceal itself in the errors of orthography and of pronunciation with which ignorance has obscured it.

The Woodvilles were one of these families, gradually going down in the world, gradually sinking lower and lower, since the days of bluff King Hal. Nothing was now left of their once large possessions but the old manor-house and grounds, a few fields, and one small farm. The fields and the small farm were let for about one hundred a-year, and on this pittance Old Woodville—Squire Woodville, as he was called in derision—with a stately old wife, four sons, and an orphan niece, Violet, lived, or rather languished. Pride, senseless family pride, at once their bane and antidote, for it prevented

their sinking, like so many others, with the vulgar but well-to-do, and earning a comfortable living at the expense of a comfortless vanity. The pride of the present Old Woodville, his wife and his sons, was, if possible, an exaggeration of that of his immediate predecessors : it amounted almost to a mania. The sons preferred living on the most wretched fare, dressing in the most economical, but at the same time extraordinary manner, and spending their time in the most fruitless pursuits, to doing anything—whatever precedents there might be for such exertions—that could in any degree lower them in their own eyes, or entitle any one to look upon them as other than “gentlemen;” and in this romantic folly they were, strange to say, not only sanctioned but encouraged by their parents.

Nay, to such a height did Old Woodville carry his absurdity, that when the master of a school where his sons went as day-scholars, partly out of pity for their evident poverty, partly from a conviction of their uncommon abilities, and partly as a good arrangement for himself, called at the manor-house, and proposed to take two of the boys as junior ushers, Old Woodville, a very hale and passionate man, strode up to him, seized the poor nervous and astounded little pedagogue by the collar, motioned to his incensed wife to open the parlour and the hall doors, and dragging him to the entrance, with one well-applied kick sent him down a flight of broken, moss-grown steps.

More than one generation of the gentry of the neighbourhood, of course, had ceased to visit, or indeed to hold any communion with people whom they affected to look upon as insane paupers ; and as for those of a lower grade, he must have been a bold farmer or a reckless shop-keeper indeed, who would have attempted anything like acquaintanceship with the “mad squire or his madder sons.”

However, the enmity and dislike called forth by the pride and reserve of those so very poor, was boundless, and if any of his narrow-minded and vindictive neighbours could do “the mad squire” a bad turn, the opportunity was seldom lost.

The vulgar and the low-born generally feel a sort of

enmity against those of gentle blood and breeding ; but there is in them such a love and reverence of wealth that they court it and cringe to it, whatever other pretensions it may have ; but woe to the gentle born and bred, when unprotected by riches, unsecured even by competency. Malice and envy then know no bounds, and show themselves in shapes so coarse, and colours so hideous, that humanity revolts at the picture.

Certainly there was much for vulgar minds to ridicule in the mode of life of the Woodvilles ; but as they asked no favours and incurred no debts, no one had a right to insult or to vilify them.

Mrs. Woodville, who luckily did not consider herself at all degraded by any female arts of housewifery which her foremothers had practised (and which were exercised only for her own household), spun all the linen, knitted all the stockings, and made all the garments of her husband, sons, and self, aided only by her adopted niece, Violet, who early showed a much greater propensity for reading and scribbling with her uncle and his two elder sons than for the spinning wheel and knitting needles of her erect and stately aunt.

Authorship of a lofty and romantic character, the only means of increasing their resources, which the squire and his sons did not hold in supreme contempt, occupied all the time not devoted to fishing, shooting, and long excursions in a crazy old sailing boat, or on foot, in the wildest scenery around.

Very great, indeed, were the old squire's misgivings, as to the propriety and dignity of a gentleman's receiving any emolument for the produce of his brain ; and Violet was obliged constantly to keep before him the loftiest names of those who had received remuneration for their writings, and still influenced by his mania, he would exclaim :—

“ After all, they were hucksters ; and I doubt whether I shall ever bring myself to it.”

Poor old fellow ! he need not have troubled himself ; for the wild, crude, obscure, and pompous old romances, which occupied his time, and the visionary, half-insane poems produced by his sons, would not have been tolerated in the dark ages, and no publisher of the

present day would have given him "a penny for his thoughts." Still he wrote on, in wet or wintry days, surrounded by his tall, handsome sons, and his pretty Violet, all fancying themselves inspired—the eyes of all "in a fine frenzy rolling."

Violet, however, whose father (the old squire's younger brother) was considered to have formed a sad *mésalliance* in marrying one of the daughters of an artist in a neighbouring country town—Violet had, perhaps, by that very match, inherited some share of common sense and worldly wisdom; she loved her eccentric uncle and his strange sons with deep tenderness, and both her parents dying in her childhood, and leaving her penniless, she clung, with filial affection, to those who had so nobly adopted her, and added this burden to the many they were already so unequal to bear. But Violet saw their foibles, their follies, their eccentricities, their madness; and she early resolved that, by some means or other (as yet she knew not how), she, as they were too proud to help themselves, would help them to means, which would make their present views and pursuits seem less absurd and out of character.

The family of Violet's mother were still living in the country town, where her father had wooed and won her. Two of her aunts kept a school for young ladies, and one of them, a third, had, against her friends' wishes, adopted the stage as a profession, and obtained some celebrity as an actress.

It was never very agreeable to the old squire and his haughty dame to allow Violet to spend any time with these "low connexions," as they termed them; but the necessity of her acquiring some feminine accomplishments, and of showing some respect for her mother's family, made them permit her to be with them occasionally. And it was while there, taking lessons of a dancing master of eminence, who attended the pupils twice a-week, that the Misses Orde and their mother first saw and admired the pretty, strange, and highly-gifted girl, whom they now recognised in the Juliet of the Brighton theatre.

Woodville Manor was situated in a wild and remote part of the village, in which Mrs. Orde resided, and

where she was certainly one of the wealthiest and most important inhabitants.

The great interest that Violet Woodville inspired in the Ordes, by her peculiar beauty and grace, her strange character, and her eccentric but endearing manners, ripened, in the frequent meetings at the dancing-school, into intimacy, and even affection.

Several pretty figure dances, which Monsieur Le Zephyr invented and taught, were composed only for *les trois Grâces*, as, with his French perception of the beautiful, and natural love of giving pleasure, he always designated the Misses Orde and Violet.

In order to perfect themselves in what they learnt at school, practisings at home were necessary, and therefore Mrs. Orde frequently invited Violet to spend, first an afternoon, then a day, and finally, even a week at a time, at her elegant home. Mrs. Orde considered herself (and justly too) better fitted to give laws and fashions to the surrounding gentry than to follow theirs, and as long as there was nothing against the Woodvilles but their poverty and eccentricity, she felt a pride and pleasure in giving her daughters so sweet and intellectual a companion, and in making the young Violet for the first time acquainted with the elegant pleasures and comforts of wealth.

The advantage, however, to the poor girl was a very doubtful one. Never did the old manor-house seem so desolate, so bare, so dreary, and so chill, and never did her aunt's "Establishment for Young Ladies" look so mean and vulgar, as after a visit at the hall.

The affectionate and imaginative girl, after she had become familiar with the luxuries of modern refinement—an elegant table, good and prompt attendance, a carriage, a bath, a fire in her room in winter, and a thousand comforts and luxuries, which the wealthy enjoy without ever noticing them—Violet, I say, was often, on her return to the old manor-house, ready to weep (not for herself, but for those dear to her) over the chill discomforts, the scanty meals, and the many privations of her poor but proud relations.

Quite unable to afford to dress as gentlemen, and quite resolved not to be attired like the lower orders, the Woodvilles (father and sons) adopted a sort of costume

peculiar to themselves. Their linen, we have said, was spun, and their hose knitted by the stately dame of the manor-house; and it was her clever head, and thrifty hand too, aided by her one Abigail, and sometimes by Violet, which planned and executed for "the squire" and his sons a sort of coarse green baize tunic, confined to the waist with a leather girdle, and with pantaloons and gaiters to match. This economical and singular costume was by no means unbecoming to men remarkable for the handsomest faces and finest figures in the county. Hare skin caps in winter, and hats of coarse straw, plaited by Mrs. Woodville and her maid, in summer, completed this singular costume; and if behind their backs a good deal of ridicule was excited among rich and poor by the singular appearance of "the squire" and his sons, neither gentle nor simple ventured a laugh or a jest till those broad backs were turned and a good way off; for five tall, stalwart, active men, were no contemptible foes, and any one of them would have been ready with a challenge to a gentleman, or a thrashing for a clod, on the slightest provocation.

Again, often when Violet sat at Mrs. Orde's elegant table, she sighed to think of the hard and scanty fare of her uncle and his family,—the fish they were such adepts at catching, and the birds, rabbits, &c., &c., which abounded in that wild country, being almost the only animal food ever seen on their table, which often presented nothing but coarse, brown bread, cheese made of the milk of the goats they kept in abundance on the common, potatoes, and salads. No beverage, but water or goats' milk, ever enlivened their repast; and Violet never having tasted wine or beer till she was sixteen years of age, never could accustom herself to take them, or to like the flavour of either. With tea and coffee it was different: they soon became almost necessary to her comfort; and her ardent desire to supply her dear family with these and other elegancies of life, wrought in her mind, till the extraordinary resolution we have to record was taken and acted upon.

Among the few books to which poor Violet had had access at her uncle's, Shakspeare held a distinguished place; indeed, she had almost learnt to read from those

immortal pages, and knew by heart all the most beautiful and interesting passages. Perhaps it was this which first gave her young mind a passion for the drama, and subsequently for the stage.

It was when she was little more than sixteen, and with the keen sense of elegance and discomfort remarkable in youth, that she first longed to live always as she did when visiting the Ordes, and still more pined to see those dear to her enjoying similar luxuries; when first she felt ashamed of the odd and coarse attire of her uncle and cousins, and first felt how much she was set off by the pretty dresses, bonnets, &c., &c., her new friends lavished on her, and which formed so strong a contrast to her blue and pink gingham dresses, and to the one white muslin dancing frock given by her aunts, the Mortons; when first, too, she found her appetite fail, when the repast was of bread and goats' cheese: it was just at this time, when the affectionate girl so longed to supply the table at the manor with the delicacies she could not half enjoy at the hall while they were wanting in her home, that the theatre at Manningtree opened, and her aunt, the actress who had acquired much skill and some renown, came down to her native town, to take the leading female characters.

Miss Morton was a fine and graceful woman, with a perfect passion for her profession, a sanguine hope of being, sooner or later, the Siddons of her day, and a disgust, even to loathing, of all less brilliant and more drudging resources of female talent and industry.

Violet saw her act, and was entranced, bewildered, inspired! She had long been pining to turn to account (for the benefit of those she loved, and who had reared her) the genius she felt glowing in her breast; but for the ill-remunerated and fatiguing drudgery of teaching she felt she had no vocation, and the poor gains of her aunts, who had consumed the best part of their lives in that monotonous, thankless, and wearying occupation, were far from inducing her to wish to embark in it; aware, too, as she was, how much it was despised by the family at the manor-house, and how much opposition her attempting anything of the kind would be certain to encounter.

No! the stage seemed to offer to Violet a much more brilliant, rapid, and promising way of securing competence for herself, and affluence (comparative, at least) for those whom she loved so tenderly.

Her aunt, the actress, whom under the seal of inviolable secrecy she consulted, after hearing her untutored, but intensely feeling recitations of some of Shakspeare's masterpieces, gave her the greatest encouragement, and loving her profession for its own sake, longed to secure to the stage such an ornament as she felt certain Violet would become.

Violet had all but made up her mind to put herself under the guidance and protection of her aunt, and commence her theatrical career unknown to any one, when the typhus fever carried off that clever and rising relative.

For some time the shock caused by this event, and the sorrow she felt, gave a turn to Violet's thoughts. Two of her eccentric cousins, who had always been rivals in her childish and girlish favour, now that Violet's charms of person and mind ripened into perfection, began to torment her with indications of a passion she felt no inclination to encourage. Herbert Woodville, the eldest, gloomy, melancholy, and desponding, alarmed her by his wild glances, and his furious jealousy of Valentine, the youngest son, a beautiful, glad-hearted, and high-spirited youth, who loved Violet as fondly, though not as madly, as his melancholy brother.

About this time a visit to the Ordes rekindled in Violet's bosom all the ambition to rise out of her mean estate, and all the disgust of poverty and inaction she had felt before her aunt's death; and, tormented by the rival attentions of her cousins, weary of the life she led, and feeling within her breast the stirrings of that genius which can never leave its possessor long in peace and inaction, Violet, hearing that the company to which her aunt had belonged were at a town some thirty miles off, wrote in strict confidence to the manager, met him, by appointment, at a village a few miles from her home, was engaged by him, and privately left her native spot.

She wrote a letter to her uncle, assuring him that she was safe, and, on the road to fame and fortune; that

inquiry would be useless, as she had taken measures to evade it; that she had long been ashamed of adding to his many and great burdens; and that one of her chief objects in leaving him was to win the means of securing him competence in his old age.

She assured him that no niece and pupil of his and of her excellent aunt's would *ever ever* embark in any undertaking inconsistent with the highest feelings of honour and honesty; but that till she had in some measure succeeded he must be satisfied with that assurance; and that she would not keep him, her dear aunt, and her kind cousins, one unnecessary moment in suspense! But that when she had achieved her laudable object, they should behold her again.

With this vague and unsatisfactory account the poor old squire was obliged to be content, for knowing nothing of Violet's theatrical propensities, and the manager leaving for Ireland forthwith, and taking Violet with him, there was no clue whatever to her movements. The brothers were frantic: Herbert moodily, Valentine violently so.

Herbert took to moping, roamed about alone by moonlight, talked to himself, and alarmed his family by symptoms of melancholy; Valentine, unable to bear his existence, privately set off in search of Violet.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIUMPH.

WHATEVER "Squire Woodville" thought or felt, on the receipt of Violet's mysterious communication, he determined to put a good face upon the matter, and not give any publicity to her flight, or any rise to scandalous reports by making a stir in the affair. From the tenor of her letter, he was convinced inquiry and pursuit would be fruitless.

He had, strange to say, great confidence, not merely in Violet's purity of intention, but in her prudence and management. He could not believe that a Woodville,

brought up under his roof, and with all his own maxims (as he believed) grafted on a flourishing stem of family pride, would ever do anything to dishonour her name or degrade herself.

The "mad squire" had lived so much in seclusion, or in a solitude peopled only by the immaculate and romantic creations of his own Quixotic fancy, that the fears and suspicions that would have crowded on the experienced mind of the vilely wise, never for an instant threw a shadow on the "whiteness" of the old man's soul.

Missing, at the time of his niece's departure, a crabbed MS. of a voluminous old romance he had spent years in composing, and which Violet happened to have in her keeping at the time of her flight, he felt convinced, that, struck by its merits, she was resolved to get it published, and had set off for the metropolis, both with that view and with the hope of disposing of some of her own poems, and of getting engaged to write for some fashionable periodical.

To her aunts, the Mortons, and to her kind friends, the Ordes, Violet wrote briefly, and so mysteriously, that Mrs. Orde, who knew the world well, felt great misgivings about her fate, and actually called at the old manor-house to make further inquiries.

She could elicit, however, nothing satisfactory from the old uncle and his excited sons. Shortly after Violet's departure, came the invitation from Lady Beauchamp to her daughters' weddings; and in the new prospects, plans, and ambitious projects engendered by the two "great matches," Violet and her fortunes were forgotten.

But often, over the fireside at Brighton, had Mrs. Orde, Miss Jenny, and the girls, marvelled what had become of the strange, the gifted, and beautiful Violet; and while Miss Jenny prophesied that evil would befall her, and expressed her conviction that man, wicked, designing man, was at the bottom of the mystery, Mrs. Orde shook her head with sympathetic fears, and Rosalie and Jeannetta turned pale at the thought of what might, perhaps, at that very time, be their young companion's doom. Little did they imagine, while they dwelt on her genius, her beauty, and her innocence, that she lay so

near them, and under such romantic, but blameless circumstances, in a poor inn, within a short walk of their abode! Much as Mrs. Orde and her daughters had admired Violet in private life, and engaging and gifted as they had thought her, they were amazed by her charms, her powers, and her graces, set off by all the arts of the toilette and all the magic of stage effect.

A clever French writer says, that all merit, to obtain its due, requires a pedestal to show it off to advantage; and, certainly, to show off female beauty and genius, there is no "pedestal" like the stage.

This is the secret of the brilliant and lofty marriages, made in all times by women who, in spite of all the prejudices against actresses, have found the stage the direct road to the peerage—women whose beauty and genius, without that "pedestal," would scarcely have secured them a competence and a husband among the middling classes, have seen nobles that dated from the Conquest contending for their acceptance.

Violet's whole soul was in her touching and feminine part. She was too entirely the Juliet to remember she was the *actress*, and was as yet far too new to her profession to be able to make opportunities, or to avail herself of any that arose, of scanning the audience, criticising the ladies, and ogling the gentlemen.

The thrilling tenderness, and yet the maiden modesty with which Juliet owns her love, had in it, in Violet's personation of the part, a pathos so sublime and so captivating, that Jeannetta stole a fearful glance at the count, to see if his thoughts were not wandering to the enchanting Violet; but while she spoke, he gazed in Jeannetta's eyes as if Violet's words were only the translation of what he read there.

"Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek,
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.
Fain would I dwell on *form*, fain, fain, deny
What I have spoke—but farewell compliment!"
Dost love me? I know thou wilt say—ay;
And I will take thy word; yet, if thou swear'st,
Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries
They say Jove laughs. O, gentle Romeo!
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully;

of conscious power, was dancing through Violet's veins. Well may the poet exclaim, "My mind to me a kingdom is."

Alone in that mean lodging—with years of hard work before her, not conscious that she had a friend in the place but the interested manager, whose very kindness was too coarse and patronizing to be agreeable to a "Woodville"—a small fire of cinders and coal-dust, with the green smoke struggling through the black mass, like genius through the difficulties and disappointments of life (the sort of fire always found in poor lodgings, where coals are included), a dull day without, a dreary room within, sleet and snow beating on the few whom the necessities of life drove abroad, and the wild wind, as in spiteful triumph, displaying the tattered garb of poverty—yet Violet was happy—happier far than many a daughter of indolence and fashion, without a want or a wish ungratified, reclining on a velvet couch, the richly spread breakfast-table before her, turning listlessly over the pages of the "last new novel," and doubtful to which of the hundred well-known monotonous and exhausted haunts of pleasure she shall be borne in her gay equipage—which of her many elegant and modish costumes shall array her languid charms, and which of her many *fadés, blasés*, lisping, tedious cavaliers, shall bear at once her shawl and her impertinence, and inflict on her his *ennui* and his vapidité.

Yes, like salt to the ocean, light and air to the flower, and spirit to the lamp, is hope to the human heart, and some object *difficult, but not unattainable*, to the human mind. Violet has already enjoyed the luxury of sending one five-pound note, with a letter full of virtuous confidence, though mysterious still, to her dear relatives at the manor-house; and she was just—having mastered her part, and completed her costume—hesitating whether she could afford a mutton chop or not for her frugal repast, when a carriage drove up to her door, putting her landlady and little maid-of-all-work in what they called "a fluster," and which compels us to drive off to the Ordes' in search of an explanation. ;

CHAPTER XXI.

POUR ET CONTRE.

WHATEVER the enemies of the drama may assert, and whatever the bigoted and puritanical may profess to believe, the experience of most of us (if candidly revealed) would establish the fact that there is something ennobling to the human mind, and softening to the human heart, in the best and highest order of dramatic representations.

To accustom the mind—the youthful mind especially—to what is gross, profligate, or profane, must, of course, be to dull the purity of the spirit, to sully the whiteness of the soul, to brush the bloom from the fruit; but, co-equal with the power to injure, by what is low and bad, is that of benefiting by what is great and good. And it is our firm belief that (after the inspired writings themselves) the seeds of virtue, honour, truth, valour, and delicacy have never been so abundantly sown from any source as from the best of Shakspeare's plays; and, indeed, from other and more modern dramatic writers, whose noble aim is to do good, rather than to court popularity.

The dramatic muse, fallen, degraded, deserted as she is, might yet, by powerful and judicious hands, be raised from the mire, purified, re-instated, re-enthroned, and rank (far below, indeed) but still next in station to "lovely religion," in the blessed office of deterring men from evil and urging them to what is great and good.

Filial ingratitude never seems so black, so deadly as when we listen to vile Regan, or the basely triumphant Goneril; never does a daughter's devotion seem so lovely and so worthy of imitation as in sweet Cordelia; and never do we so loathe the vice of the bad, or so love the dutiful tenderness of the good, as when, through blinding tears, we gaze on the betrayed, the outraged, the discrowned Lear himself.

Again, how meanly hideous is the weak woman, prompted by ambition and vile murderous treason, of hen-pecked Macbeth; and what homily on murder and

of conscious power, was dancing through Violet's veins. Well may the poet exclaim, "My mind to me a kingdom is."

Alone in that mean lodging—with years of hard work before her, not conscious that she had a friend in the place but the interested manager, whose very kindness was too coarse and patronizing to be agreeable to a "Woodville"—a small fire of cinders and coal-dust, with the green smoke struggling through the black mass, like genius through the difficulties and disappointments of life (the sort of fire always found in poor lodgings, where coals are included), a dull day without, a dreary room within, sleet and snow beating on the few whom the necessities of life drove abroad, and the wild wind, as in spiteful triumph, displaying the tattered garb of poverty—yet Violet was happy—happier far than many a daughter of indolence and fashion, without a want or a wish ungratified, reclining on a velvet couch, the richly spread breakfast-table before her, turning listlessly over the pages of the "last new novel," and doubtful to which of the hundred well-known monotonous and exhausted haunts of pleasure she shall be borne in her gay equipage—which of her many elegant and modish costumes shall array her languid charms, and which of her many *fadés*, *blasés*, lisping, tedious cavaliers, shall bear at once her shawl and her impertinence, and inflict on her his *ennui* and his rapidity.

Yes, like salt to the ocean, light and air to the flower, and spirit to the lamp, is hope to the human heart, and some object *difficult, but not unattainable*, to the human mind. Violet has already enjoyed the luxury of sending one five-pound note, with a letter full of virtuous confidence, though mysterious still, to her dear relatives at the manor-house; and she was just—having mastered her part, and completed her costume—hesitating whether she could afford a mutton chop or not for her frugal repast, when a carriage drove up to her door, putting her landlady and little maid-of-all-work in what they called "a fluster," and which compels us to drive off to the Ordes' in search of an explanation.

how many who soundly slumber through a sermon will drink in wisdom under the disguise of a play!

There was nothing particularly applicable to Gerard Esdaile's state of mind in the performance of that evening, and yet the effect of the whole was to soften his heart, and subdue the evil and reckless spirit within him.

He went to the theatre full of jealous desperation; bitter revenge and undutiful indifference to his [poor father's blighted hopes, and miserable disappointment; but by degrees he felt the "dull cold stone within him melt;" pity took the place of jealous wrath—pity for himself, pity for Jeannetta, pity for all who love. It seemed to him as if, indeed, "the course of true love never did run smooth."

As if his envied rival himself would one day, perhaps, find the fruit he had snatched from his parched lips turn to ashes on his own—as if Jeannetta's darkly fringed lids were weighed with unshed tears, and as if there must be a bitter retribution (which in his altered mood he would fain avert from that beauteous and beloved head) for her who could so readily turn from the friend and companion of her childhood—one who had loved her before he knew what love meant, and shared, for so many years, her every joy and every woe—to lavish all the tenderness he would have died to win on a stranger, unknown to her a few weeks back—unknown *now* as far as all worth knowing goes—feelings, principles, former life and present habits—born her foe, and, what was more important still, as he believed, the foe of her faith; one who was either, like most foreigners (professing Catholicism) a scoffer and a free-thinker, Deist, if not Atheist, at heart, or a bigot who would lead her from light into darkness, and use his influence over her heart to endanger her soul.

"Ah no," he thought, while tears of pity for her rose to his eyes; "she will, she must repent so rash, so cruel a choice. But I—I will not rebel against the Great Disposer of events, nor at the first trial of my faith prove myself wanting; I will not sacrifice my dear, devoted father, and all his hopes, to a vain and fickle girl. Poor Jeannetta! one day she may wish she had not spurned so great a love as mine."

"O Love! what is it, in this world of ours,
That makes it fatal to be loved?—ah, why
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter—a sigh?
As those who dote on odours, pluck the flowers
And place upon their breasts, but place to die;
So the frail beings we would fondly cherish,
Are laid within our bosoms but to perish."

"Rosalie," he whispered, as he gave her his arm, to lead her to the carriage, "dear Rosalie! sweet sister of my heart! a change has come over the spirit of my dream. You have prevailed. I go at once back to Oxford. I will not sacrifice my father, my prospects—alas, *my* prospects!—I should say, *his* hopes, and your esteem, in a paltry impatience of a first disappointment, or a base revenge over one who never gave me reason to think she loved me, but as a friend, whatever wild hope and youthful vanity may have led me to believe. I go, dear Rosalie—no longer hopeless, maddened, but sobered and subdued—you shall hear from me, for I shall never forget your sweet, your sublime sympathy. God grant Jeannetta may have chosen wisely—though my heart misgives me sadly—for me life has lost its charm; but, perhaps, I can still be useful, though not happy, and—

"'To bear, is to conquer our fate.'"

So saying, he kissed Rosalie's hand with great emotion, assisted her into the carriage, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BARON.

To poor Rosalie, the *petit souper* that followed the play was tedious and wearisome in the extreme. Her thoughts were with poor Gerard Esdaile, on his long, cold, lonely journey, with no companions but his blighted hopes, his fears of exposure and disgrace, his jealous anguish, and his disappointed love.

Rosalie felt almost angry with Jeannetta, for the comparative indifference with which she heard that Gerard was gone. Jeannetta listening, with a new and thrilling

ecstasy, to the whispered tale of passion to which her heart so wildly responded, was far too much engrossed by the present to think of the quiet past, spent so calmly with poor Gerard, or the desolate future which awaited him. The love we do not share, and cannot reciprocate, seems so unreal, we have little or no faith in it; and that is, perhaps, one reason why the unloving, however wildly cherished, always seem to act so cold and merciless a part by the unloved. But Rosalie, while she bitterly decides, in Jeannetta's case, that love is a very selfish passion, is not aware that she is herself a living proof of her assertion. But for her own devoted, though unrequited love for Gerard, could she have shown such impatience of Hyacinthe de St. Felix's half-suppressed sighs (*soupirs étouffés*, as the French call them), the melancholy of large blue eyes, moistened with tears, and fixed so despairingly on her? Could she have been so vexed with her mother for listening with flattered vanity to the *capitaine's* fulsome praises, when the son of her adoption had left them in danger and despair? Would she, but for the very influence she blamed in others, have pettishly made her excuses, and retired for the night with her aunt Jenny, when her sister and the count settled to a lesson in English, which the former proposed to give her lover, who already knew something of the language, and when Mrs. Orde undertook to teach the *capitaine*, who knew nothing of it, to pronounce the letters of the alphabet?

So entirely, indeed, were Jeannetta and her mother engrossed, the one by her first love, the other by her last flirtation, that two o'clock struck before they retired to their apartments; and during all that time not one word had they exchanged about the grand event of the evening—the recognition of Violet Woodville, in the beautiful and gifted “Juliet” of the stage. However, the next morning, at their late breakfast, Rosalie, much out of humour at the proceedings of the previous evening, commented, rather bitterly, on the indifference shown to both their former friends, Gerard and Violet.

With regard to Gerard, some twinges of conscience might be traced in Mrs. Orde's amiable face; but Jeannetta, now heart and soul devoted to the count,

angry at the intimation that another had ventured to aspire to her love. It seemed to her excited fancy almost an insult to Montfaucon—almost treason to herself.

On the subject of Violet she was more rational.

"I have been thinking of that sweet, gifted, impassioned Juliet," she said ("a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind"), "and I propose that we find out her abode and call on her."

Mrs. Orde looked aghast, and even Rosalie seemed staggered.

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Orde, who was of the half-measure and temporizing school, "I cannot quite approve of that, now that she is an actress, and before we know what induced her to leave her home, and how she has passed her time in the interval."

"Oh," said Jeannetta, "the Juliet of last night must be all that is pure, and good, and noble."

"She seems so, indeed," said Rosalie, "and if she prove so I do not see that her being an actress (supposing necessity compels her to exert her talents for her support), need induce us to withdraw our favour from one we have loved so long and so well. What I propose is, that we write to her, and give her an opportunity of explaining all the recent past, and if to our satisfaction, we can then show her any attentions which our own hearts may prompt and which may comfort and support hers."

"*You* can write, if you will, dear Rosalie," said Jeannetta; "but *I* would not for worlds wound poor Violet, in her present new and anxious position, by anything that her sensitive heart could construe into a doubt. Mamma, I know, thinks and feels as I do on all points, and I am sure she will on this—suspicion forms no part of her generous nature, nor I hope of mine."

"A moderate degree of caution, sister, is not suspicion," replied Rosalie, a little nettled by the inuendo; "and, since you draw it from me, I must say to both of you (to mamma with all duty and deference, and to you, Jeannetta, in all kindness, but as a necessary hint), that there is often more of rashness than of generosity,

more of weakness than of charity, in allowing oneself to be drawn into sudden intimacies with those who, without any satisfactory introduction, or any sort of guarantee for their respectability, may turn out the very reverse of what they represent themselves—and whom, after associating with them almost as brothers, one may find it necessary to cut even as acquaintances.”

“If,” said Jeannetta, pale with indignation, trembling with excitement, and her dark eyes flashing through her tears—“if, by that cowardly and paltry innuendo, Rosalie, you mean any attack on—I will not say the ‘respectability’ (I scorn the huckster epithet), but the nobility, the greatness, the honour of the Count de Montfaucon, let me tell you, sister, your causeless enmity only increases my admiration, my esteem, my reverence for that distinguished nobleman. That he is all he professes to be, and more, is amply guaranteed to me, not by a lisping introduction, a bow, and a simper from some idler who has met him in an assembly of fools, but by every noble sentiment he utters—every change of his aristocratic countenance—every movement of his thoroughbred person; added to this, he was introduced to me by a *deed* which I should have thought would have secured him my sister’s good-will, as it has done my dear mamma’s—the rescue of my life at the risk of his own! I say nothing of my own internal conviction that he is one of the first of men—but, of course, that has some weight with myself in the matter; and since, Rosalie, you seem at present to doubt his claims on your attention and respect, perhaps you will own he has some right to both, when I tell you that he is the object of my first and passionate love—the acknowledged lord of my heart and of my destiny—my all but affianced lover—my future husband!”

As Jeannetta spoke, with sparkling eyes, flushing cheek, and all a young girl’s beautiful pride and faith in the object of her love, Rosalie grew very pale, tears filled her eyes, and throwing herself on her knees beside her sister, who sat in an arm-chair erect and stately as a queen, she sobbed:—

“Oh, Jeannetta! recall those dreadful words. He is not, he cannot, already be your affianced lover. If he

has proposed, dearest, do not, I implore you, do not accept him till we have made some inquiries concerning him—mamma, dear mamma, do advise, entreat, insist. You said you would ask our aunt Beauchamp about these foreigners—it is too dreadful to think of, Jeannetta giving her warm, trusting heart to one of whom we know nothing but that he has a handsome person, a plausible tongue, and a commanding manner. Think, dearest mother, he is a Roman Catholic.”

“I am not so sure of that,” said Jeannetta; “he smiled with as much contempt as you would, Rosalie, when some one mentioned the ‘Miraculous Virgins’ and the relics of St. Anthony.”

“Then he is an atheist—a free-thinker—a hypocrite!”
“Nay; why not a Protestant?”

“Because he proclaims himself a Romanist, even while privately sneering at all he publicly professes to believe.”

“He was born, baptized, and bred a Romanist, it is true,” said Jeannetta, “and perhaps a Montfaucon may not choose to be pointed at in his own country as the first renegade of that great race; but I am quite satisfied he thinks as I do, and I am not at all sure, so truly great and truly noble as is he, that, when we are married, I may not have the unspeakable pride and pleasure of converting him publicly, as well as privately.”

“When you are married—oh! sister, whom I have loved from the cradle,” sobbed Rosalie, burying her face in Jeannetta’s lap—“oh! be not so rash. Think what bad, what cruel, what faithless husbands these foreigners are—remember Mademoiselle de la Rosé’s dreadful account of the way in which her father used to beat and outrage her lovely, gentle mother—think what a brute Monsieur Le Zephyr, with all his fine and finnikin ways, was said to be to his poor little wife—think how Henrietta Trevor came back from her wretched home in Paris—first ran away with that handsome wretch, Latour, and then ran away from him, all bruises, scars, and even scratches; her fortune all spent; her very jewels and clothes gone; her child dead; and preferring her harsh, sea-captain of a father, whom she had offended, and the step-mother who hated her, to the brutal insolence, profligacy, and tyranny of the man to whom she had sacrificed everything.”

"Rosalie," said Jeannetta, "I hear you out because I know all you say springs from affection, however unjust and blind that affection may make you; but no one, dearest, would ever marry Frenchman or Englishman if the wickedness of some husbands were to be visited on all."

"No," said Mrs. Orde, who had been weeping during Rosalie's passionate appeal, because to some people it is so much easier to weep than to advise or to act; "no, I think, with Jeannetta, that we have every reason to believe the count to be all he professes, and every way worthy of her love and acceptance; but I think with you, darling Rosalie, that it would be right, before matters go too far, to make all proper inquiries, and for this purpose, if you will give me my desk, I will write at once to Lady Beauchamp."

"Nothing Lady Beauchamp can say can at all affect me or my determination, mamma," said Jeannetta. "She will, of course, be mad with rage and envy, and perhaps invent a thousand calumnies in the hopes of preventing my eclipsing her daughters."

"But, sister, granting that the Count de Montfaucon is all he appears to be, and I own him noble-looking, elegant, aristocratic, intellectual, all you can wish to believe him, how do you account for his great intimacy with that little, forward, ill-bred puppy, the baron, and that bold, pushing, impertinent *parvenu* of a Capitaine Crèveœur?"

"Rosalie! are you mad?" cried Mrs. Orde; "bold, pushing, impertinent *parvenu*!—what, that frank, brave, military creature, full of wit, good-humour, candour, and *bonhomie*! If I needed any assurance of the count's respectability, it would be amply supplied by the friendship and intimacy of that brave, open-hearted soldier; and with regard to the baron, I must say, child, I think you stand in your own light, for Crèveœur tells me he is of the *grande noblesse*; an only son, idolized by his parents, who are millionaires, and, better than all, desperately in love with *la petite* Rosalie."

"Impertinent upstarts! both of them," said Rosalie, excessively indignant at the presumption of both; "and

much do I fear we may all live to repent most bitterly of an introduction—”

“Which saved my life!” said Jeannetta.

“To make it miserable,” sobbed Rosalie; “but here they come, armed with bouquets and cornettes of bon-bons. Well, sister, about Violet; shall I write to her?”

“Not for me; after the count is gone I shall call.”

“Perhaps you will ask his advice on the point, my love,” said Mrs. Orde.

“No, mamma; I may request his company, but I always mean to act for myself, married or single.”

“As long as you can,” said Rosalie, darting out at the back drawing-room door as the visitors tapped at the front one. Rosalie, still in tears, retired to the apartment of Miss Jenny Macpherson, who, when she had heard her account of the cause of her grief, in the true style of Job’s comforters, exclaimed:—

“Greet on, bairn, greet on; I doot na’ ye’ve cause eneugh, and will ha’e mair. When ance mon gets a footing in a happy hame, a’ peace and comfort and confidence is clean gane amang the weak, wilfu’, vain, women folk!—fra’ saxteen to saxty, it’s a’ the same. Flottery on ane side, vonity on the ither, and folly on baith. Greet on, ye’ve cause eneugh, for, if I mistake na’, it’s mair than a sister’s youthfu’ modness ye’ve to fear: a mither’s vonity is stranger still; ye’ll ha’e not only a French brither, lassie, but a French father to lord it o’er you.”

Little comforted by this prophecy, Rosalie retired to her room, which she persisted in keeping, with the excuse, not a false one either, of a severe headache, although a beautiful bouquet and a glittering cornette of bon-bons were brought up by Phœbe, with a thousand compliments, condolences, and entreaties for a few minutes of her divine company from the beaux below.

This *morning* call (during which Mrs. Orde indulged the captain and the count with a lesson in English) extended till dusk. The baron amused himself with writing the air and words of a song called “Blonde aux yeux bleus, composé par le Baron Hyacinthe de Saint Felix, et dédié à Mademoiselle Rosalie Orde.”

About half-an-hour before the dinner-time, Rosalie, from her window, saw the captain and the baron hand her mother and sister into the carriage, and with the gay assurance of privileged suitors, spring in after them.

The baron stole slowly and sadly away on foot, glancing up at Rosalie's window, with a meek and tearful smile, but curses in his false heart and on his whiskered lips.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FOREIGN ALLIANCES.

WHATEVER the Count de Montfaucon thought of Jeanetta's scheme of visiting and patronizing the young actress, he took good care to agree to her wishes in the most grateful and cordial manner possible.

An English lover of his rank would possibly have protested against such a step, and a lovers' quarrel would of course have ensued. English lovers are said to be more unmanageable than English husbands, probably because no English bride elect will condescend to the system of coaxing and wheedling which we grieve to see English wives too prone to practise, and to which few Englishmen can offer much available resistance. Frenchmen, on the contrary, once married, have no such amiable weakness. Frenchwomen are aware of this fact, and seldom try to obtain anything (likely to be refused), except by a *coup de main*, a *coup de force*, or a *tour d'adresse*—that is to say, by a surprise, by decision, or by cunning. As to "affianced lovers" in France (among the higher classes), there is no such thing.

A French girl never refuses the man her father proposes to her, nor a Frenchman the bride his interest suggests.

One of the most endearing and romantic elements of society, courtship, love-making, attachment, or what you will, is thus quite cut out. An engagement is like any other mercantile transaction, a *mariage de convenances* like any other bargain. The loves of the pure of heart, the young, the free, whether secret or admitted, hopeful or hopeless, have a sweet alluring interest, both for the

parties themselves, and for all who detect the presence of the ever self-betraying deity—love! But in France no one has the pleasure of watching a pair of young lovers. No sooner is a *demoiselle à marier* home from her convent than she is affianced, and secluded during the brief interval between her betrothal and her nuptials. There are some advantages, certainly, in this matter-of-fact system of human barter. Long engagements, with their countless evils, are unknown. The rosy dawn, the dreary eve, and dark, dark night of passion are alike strangers to the single women in France. There is no passionate devotion by degrees fading, on one side at least (generally the lover's) into indifference, and finally freezing and hardening into dislike; a brief idolatry is not succeeded by a monotonous disenchantment, a total estrangement! Those who have been all the world to each other do not become as thorough strangers as if they had never shed tear for tear, never given smile for smile, never sat hand in hand in moonlit jasmine bower, or by the dear and soothing twilight of a parlour fireside during the winter hour before dinner, so wearisome to others, so exquisite to them! No—in France the hastily-affianced marry forthwith; though there is often little love, perhaps even no preference, indeed, they often seem to think, with Mrs. Malaprop, that “as both love and hate wear off in marriage, it may be well to begin with a little hate,” or at least some distaste on one side, or both.

Still the coldest *married* pair can never be the complete nothing to each other that we see the warmest *lovers* daily becoming. The union of interests, of hopes, of prospects—the great and solemn tie that children form—the interest that every human creature must take in any other human creature domesticated with itself—these, in the lowest view of marriage, make it impossible even for those who quarrel, who almost hate each other, and finally part, ever quite to snap the chain, ever to feel quite free in spirit, whatever they may seem in conduct—ever to find that total oblivion of the past, which lovers so constantly attain.

No, if the unmarried in France taste none of the wild and romantic delights of love, they have none of the miseries of desertion, the mortification, the anguish of

estrangement. A loving bride is almost unknown, but a forlorn, heart-broken old maid, is almost equally so. As a race, there are no spinsters in France; an old maid is as rare a sight there as a dead donkey is said to be with us.

So far, both sides seem equally balanced, and the two systems have much both for and against them. Would that truth and justice permitted us to draw the veil here. But those who look a little deeper into these things, and trace effects to their causes, will insist that though so far the balance is pretty even, there is one solemn and terrible fact, confirmed by all experience, which makes the system of *mariages de convenances* one most dangerous and disastrous to the morals of a land. Love will not be cheated of his own, and, once driven from his lawful home, the hearts of the young and the single, he revenges himself by working his wildest will in the bosoms of the married! Wherever the system of loveless and interested marriage prevails—*id est* (and it is a remarkable coincidence), wherever the pure doctrines of the reformed religion are not established—namely, through France, Italy, and Spain, there is scarcely a young married woman who does not love some one else far better than she loves her husband; and scarcely a married man, who, however cold, capitious, and even brutal in his own house, is not a devoted, endearing, attentive cavalier, in some other! And so it will ever be where love's public altars are desecrated and deserted—where young men and maids do not blushing but proudly flock with the snowy wreaths of virgin tenderness. He, great love! for he "will be lord of all," will have his private shrine in every foreign home, where, with conscious shame and trembling guilt, the passion-flower is twined round the brows of his votaries' altars; thence, of course, must spring domestic treachery, distrust, deceit, jealousy, and estrangement; and, therefore, though the single may suffer in many instances from the freedom of intercourse and the facilities for courtship in this dear isle, the country is not demoralized, nor a curse brought upon its sons and daughters, by the foreign system, to which the evils of our own are slight in comparison, as a fault, when weighed in the balance with crime!

Foreigners, however, in courting English ladies, gene-

rally contrive to blend the, to them, novel delights of an English love-match, and its happy, romantic courtship, with the solid advantages and complete independence of a French *mariage de convenances*.

Our English girls are generally either so beautiful, so pretty, or so blooming, compared to the sallow-complexioned and harsh-featured women of other lands, they have generally so many accomplishments and so much latent talent, are at once so loving and so loveable, and have mostly portions, which, however small they may seem in wealthy England, still when the pounds are multiplied into francs or French livres, sound so imposing, and are so important to their poverty-stricken suitors, that it is not wonderful if love and interest go for a time hand in hand, and till evil example, national influence, constitutional inconstancy, and the absence of real principle and purity of heart prevail, all seems to go smoothly enough in these foreign alliances.

But, however happily they begin, they seldom end well. "Beauty soon grows familiar to the lover," more so still to the husband. Difference of religion, of habits, of tastes, become painfully apparent, when custom gradually withdraws passion's rosy veil. Then how terrible to the "believing wife" to find in the nominal Romanist the scoffing free-thinker!—to her to whom constancy of affection is as natural as purity of thought, to discern in the chosen of her heart systematic infidelity, and a profligacy so unblushing as scarcely even to seek a disguise. Then will she find what it really is to have wedded an alien in birth and in religion, a foreigner in habits, customs, tastes, and feelings; then had she her happy girlhood back again, and her election yet to make, would she choose so lightly? Would a foreign grace or a hollow accomplishment weigh in her mind against a sterling virtue or a firm principle? Would she be so easily captivated by interested flattery, and turn with such distaste from affectionate truth? Would she prefer a graceful waltzer, an accomplished troubadour, to a man of deep research or valuable information? a flashy (often assumed) title, to the quiet dignity of an English gentleman? and some half-ruined château in the country, and half-furnished flat of a "palazzo" or an "hotel," to some

English home, which, whether hall or cottage, is sure to be replete with comfort, and the temple of cleanliness and order?

All these reflections occurred to Rosalie as she sat in a *bergère*, during her mother's and sister's absence, in the now deserted drawing-room, gazing into the red embers of the expiring fire; for the ladies, with their pupils, had been too much engrossed to attend to any flame less subtle than that of Cupid. But Jeannetta! to her the prospect so gloomy to Rosalie (as she gazed upon it for her sister, through the eye of reason) was bathed in a sunny mist, and rich with "the purple light of love."

Gerard Esdaile had ever shown, both to Rosalie and Jeannetta, a brother's attention and tenderness; but, with the pride and reserve of a young Englishman, who had never told his love, whatever difference his heart made between the sisters, his manner betrayed little or none.

This was the first time, then, that Jeannetta had experienced the thousand flattering, endearing, and even intoxicating attentions, of a devoted and acknowledged lover.

To woman it is like sudden sovereignty to find herself all at once raised to despotic power over the heart of him to whom, rather than be nothing, she would be a slave, and of whose very soul she finds herself the empress.

Every hour of a life hitherto (like all human lives) made up of some joy, some sorrow, and much *ennui*, much anxiety, and much regret—every hour, I say, is now full to an overflow generally of the blissful present, if not of enchanting and minute retrospects of recent and pure delights, or boundless anticipations of coming rapture.

And thus it was now with Jeannetta. No marvel, then, with her entire faith in him she loved so wildly—no marvel if Rosalie's cautious doubts and forebodings were received, almost, as a loyal heart would receive treasonable suggestions from some lips hitherto dear and sacred. With Jeannetta it was now that sweet slumber of the spirit, necessary to the full enjoyment of love's young dream. What shall the waking be?

However delightful love may be to those under his im-

mediate influence, he is often a very inconvenient, selfish, blundering little fellow, in the opinion of every one else. Naturally, Mrs. Orde had not half the tact, the delicacy, and fine feeling of Jeannetta, but yet it was Mrs. Orde who first remembered how very embarrassing it would be to poor Violet that the first meeting between herself and her old friends should take place in the presence of two foreign gentlemen.

When she *did* mention her misgivings on the subject, which was just as the carriage drove up to Violet's door, all wondered it had not struck them before.

The count withdrew with many a sigh and lingering glance, fully returned by Jeannetta, and many a softly whispered adieu.

The captain, who was at an age when love becomes rather a comic than a tragic deity, playfully kissed his hand, and exclaimed, "Au revoir, mesdames!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEBUTANTE.

If any doubts had existed in the more matter-of-fact and experienced mind of Mrs. Orde, as to Violet's right to Jeannetta's delighted recognition and entire trust, they vanished at once when the little maid-of-all-work showed them abruptly into the small dingy room of the *débutante*.

Seated before her frugal meal, a handful of fire in the grate, her repast poor almost to penury, Violet, having mastered her part, and prepared her costume, was strengthening her mind against all temptations, and purifying her heart against the influence of vanity and ambition, by the earnest perusal of a book, which Mrs. Orde recognised at once as a Bible she had presented her with.

So rapt was Violet's attention in her devotions, that she did not hear the door open; and the girl had retired, and Mrs. Orde and her daughter had taken a deliberate survey of Violet, before she looked up, and recognising

them with a cry of delight and joy, rushed into their arms.

Violet, not yet attired for her part, was dressed in one of the simple pink gingham dresses *à la gracque*, her habitual attire when first Mrs. Orde and her daughters had noticed her. Her golden hair, not yet dressed for the character of Lady Constance, in "King John," was neatly and classically braided behind her beautiful ears, and fell in rich curls on her shoulders in the style of Canova's Venus. Her complexion was very fair, almost pale, and her whole appearance the perfection of maiden purity and neatness.

All this, which said nothing to the trusting and unsuspecting Jeannetta, spoke volumes to the woman of the world. She knew full well that gay attire is, in such cases, the very livery of sin, and that with woman the first temptation to err, and the first evidence of error, is dress!

But the candid countenance, the "orient blush of quick surprise," and the April smiles and tears of Violet, her unaffected delight and her sweet confidence (so unlike the shrinking shame or assumed effrontery of the "fallen"), not only rendered her dearer than ever to the impassioned Jeannetta, but quite reinstated her in the affection and confidence of Mrs. Orde.

She volunteered a full and detailed account of all that had passed since she had left her home—all her motives, all her hopes, all her plans. She touched, with a light and comic grace, upon several little incidents connected with her new career, and seemed so much more surprised than elated by her success of the night before, so much more anxious, in spite of that success, than her visitors could have believed possible in one so beautiful and so gifted;—in fact, she so completely, though unconsciously, captivated the mother and daughter, that Mrs. Orde's dinner-hour struck, and Violet's time for dressing came on, before they thought of parting, and then only with many promises of meeting very soon and very often, and with a delightful sense in Violet's young bosom that she was not desolate, and a proud delight in Jeannetta's (and even her mother's) in the power of comforting and supporting one so bewitching and so endearing.

"And oh," cried Violet, as, after a last embrace, she followed them to the head of the stairs, "do come to the theatre to-night—do come every night that I perform—only four times a-week for two or three months. I shall act so much better, and feel so much happier if I know you are there. It will be like having three guardian angels at hand. And tell Rosalie how I long to embrace her! and to consult her about so many things! And do sit in the stage box, where I can distinguish your dear faces; I shall think of *them*, and 'the eye of the stranger will haunt me no more.' You will be there to-night?—oh, do say yes!"

Jeannetta said "yes;" and Violet, full of joy and hope, returned to her room. She ran to her window to see the last of these dear friends as they drove away, but hastily withdrew when she saw a fair, slight, but rather insolent-looking officer, intently watching her as she waved her farewell to the Ordes; and catching her eye he smiled, a smile half condescension and half impertinence, and kissed his hand to her.

There was nothing in the manner of doing this which at all took from its impudence and audacity. It was a liberty taken with a pretty actress, not an attention respectfully and almost involuntarily paid to a beautiful woman.

It mortified and alarmed poor Violet a good deal—particularly as when a cab came to her door, to take her to the theatre, the same young officer stood by, as it were ready to hand her in; though it seemed his insolent courage failed him, and he only stared and smiled in silence.

And Violet, hastily looking out of the opposite window, to avoid his light, mocking eyes, encountered those of Colonel Pevensey and two other officers; all of whom bowed, smiled, and kissed their white-gloved hands, and had evidently been watching for the appearance of "the young actress."

As Violet, with a deep blush and a look of offended dignity, hastily drew back into the corner of her humble vehicle, she heard a light, mocking laugh, and those who uttered it so thoughtlessly, were not aware that it was responded to by tears of bitter mortification from the

downcast eyes of the young and virtuous girl! Yes, its cold mockery vibrated on memory's ear throughout the evening, and damped the buoyant spirit and poisoned the sweet and hopeful anticipations with which she would otherwise have received the animating welcome and the enthusiastic plaudits with which she was greeted! Yes, both on her first appearance, repeatedly throughout her whole performance, and long and loudly at its close, when again the audience insisted on her coming before the curtain, and wreaths and bouquets were profusely showered at her feet; the most brilliant and beautiful being from the officers' box, and the most welcome far a white rose from Rosalie Orde, and a fragrant bunch of violets from the imaginative and romantic Jeannetta.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SORROWS OF VIOLET.

AT an early hour the next day, and while the Ordes were still dawdling over their breakfast table, Violet was announced.

Jeannetta had made her promise to call the very next day, and Mrs. Orde having also kindly pressed her to do so, Violet's great delicacy of feeling opposed no barrier to her yielding to the warm and grateful impulses of her heart.

The Ordes had been so much more recently than Violet in the neighbourhood of the old manor-house, and of her uncle, that they had much to tell, which Violet longed and yet dreaded to learn. She was eager to know how her uncle and aunt had received the intelligence of her departure, and what construction they had put on her mysterious and questionable disappearance.

It was an unspeakable comfort to her heart (although it brought tears to her eyes) to hear that they had so prudently concealed all anxiety, even when questioned and cross-questioned by Mrs. Orde on her visit to the 'old squire'—added to this, although no caution of theirs could disguise the fact that some mystery hung over Violet's sudden disappearance, still it was generally

understood that the confidence of her uncle and aunt not only in her virtue but in her prudence was so great, that they felt quite sure the result would prove, that whatever Violet had done was "wisest, virtuouslest, discreetest, best."

This was very grateful and very touching to the affectionate heart of the young girl, and the tears it called forth were soft and balmy; not so those she shed on hearing that it was currently reported in her native village, that her departure had driven her cousin Herbert into a state of moody dejection bordering on madness, and had plunged her joyous and beloved playfellow into a grief and despair which had induced him to quarrel furiously with his rival brother, and for the first time in his life, to act in direct disobedience to, and open defiance of, the father he had hitherto so loved and venerated.

Alas! alas! Here were sad reflections indeed! Here were bitter fruits of Violet's rash but well-meant enterprise. To have brought disunion and discord into that home which had no comfort to boast of, but in the tender affection, the holy union, of all its members! Her poor uncle and aunt, the cold world denied them, on account of their poverty and eccentricity, all the homage, attention, and respect, to which their birth and their virtues so fully entitled them; yet they did not repine, for monarchs might have envied that poor primeval pair, their quiet, gentle, but undisputed sway, over their four good, gifted, and stalwart sons. However the world might sneer, evade, ridicule, and shun them, their sons never addressed them but in the language of affection and deference, always consulted, never disobeyed or disobliged them. The brothers loved each other and clung together as aliens in a foreign land might do, who felt the truth of the motto "*L'union est la force*;"—and what are the poor of gentle birth in a wealthy neighbourhood, but aliens in a foreign land?—and now Violet feels that she has taught the sons to disobey and to defy that good old man who so gloried in their disobedience and deference; and the brothers who so loved and upheld, to loathe each other!

Nor was this all. It was rumoured that on the first

appearance of furious discord, ending even in personal conflict between the rival brothers, "the old squire" had exerted an authority, which his youngest and secretly most beloved son had resisted; that a dispute had arisen in consequence, between the youth and his parents, which had led to the rash boy's insisting on permission and aid to go in search of Violet, and this being denied, he had set out on her track, penniless and alone.

Who could tell the miseries he might have encountered, might still be encountering—so helpless, without money, without friends, unused to any useful or available mode of earning a livelihood! It was possible he might at that very moment be perishing of want, or already have died of cold, of hunger, and despair.

The Ordes had nothing in the way of comfort to oppose to Violet's frantic alarm and deep distress, except a rumour, generally current and universally believed, that the poor young wanderer's fine and manly person had attracted the notice of a recruiting sergeant in a town some fifty miles from his native village, and that under the influence of that strong and irresistible argument, hunger, he had enlisted.

This, painful and degrading as it was in many points of view, was comfort compared to the dread of his wanting the common necessities of life, and it seemed the more probable to Violet, because she knew that her youngest cousin had all an ardent youth's passion for the military profession, and had only been deterred from adopting it, by the horror his father had of his doing so, except as a gentleman, and the impossibility of effecting that, when there was no money for purchase, and no interest for obtaining a commission without.

"Even if it is so," said Mrs. Orde, anxious to comfort Violet, "to my mind it is better and nobler far, in your young cousin, than remaining at home like the others, living in dependence and idleness on parents so poor and helpless; besides, Violet, you can do no good by making your eyes red, and your head ache, and unfitting yourself for the arduous profession you have adopted."

"No, indeed, Violet! Mamma is quite right," cried Jeannetta. "From what I have seen of your acting and its effect, I feel sure you may either make a large fortune

as the best actress of the age, or a brilliant match as the most fascinating and lovely girl; then in either case, if your cousin is unhappy as a soldier, you can buy him off. So cheer up, dearest Violet, and look and act your best, for I am going to coax mamma to take us again to the theatre to-night."

"And far better, dear Violet," said the less sanguine Rosalie, "far better than the dreams of an ambition, which may never be realized, is the certainty that you have, at any rate, an available talent, and that in spite of all the evil we hear of the stage and its actresses you have hit upon a dignified modesty of manner, which is the best protection from impertinence; added to which great comfort you have that of knowing how very false reports of all kinds generally are, and how very likely it is that long ere this your cousin has returned, dutiful and disgusted with the cold world, to his kind and forgiving parents."

Violet, cheered by this sensible view of the matter, dried her eyes, and having much to do, both in studying her part, and preparing her costume, for the life of an actress is a very laborious one, she took her leave, and hastened back to her lonely and miserable lodging, where the thought of her poor cousin would haunt her, and where all she had heard united to send her to the theatre with a sad heart, and to make her almost wish she had never left her home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CUPBOARD LOVE.

THINGS went on much as usual for some days; "the distinguished foreigners" were almost constantly with the Ordes; the Count de Montfaucon was all but engaged to Jeannetta; the Captain Crèveœur so devoted to Mrs. Orde, that a proposal seemed certain, and none thought the lady would object to it; the baron still played the part of the despairing lover, still professing openly misery and devotion, and vowing inwardly triumph and revenge!

But Rosalie gave him very little opportunity of fixing his large, tearful, blue eyes on her. Not only his love was odious to her, but she did not believe in it. So pretty and so pleasing as she was, she had no reason to doubt her power to win a heart apparently so susceptible as that of the fair young baron; but yet she did doubt it, and as she told Miss Jenny—whose society she now greatly affected—she despised him if his affection was assumed, and she hated him if it was real, so he had nothing to gain either way. Great were the mutual lamentations and forebodings of Rosalie and Miss Jenny over the great intimacy of these foreigners—the evident attachment and engagement between the count and Jeannetta, and the much more odious prospect of a match between Mrs. Orde and Captain Crèveœur.

The one attachment had to Rosalie almost a tragic interest. The parties were so young, so beautiful, evidently so devoted to each other, that Rosalie often gazed on them through her tears as she remembered poor Gerard, and thought of their long experience of his worth, his settled principles, his sympathies in religion, habits, manners, customs; and then recalled all she knew, or had heard, of French husbands—of domestic life among those professing Papists, but practical atheists—of the little, the mere nothing, they knew of the man whom they had received as a brother, and who was, she feared, so soon to be in that relation to her.

Yes, Rosalie's eyes were often moist with tears as she watched the entire absorption and passionate devotion of these lovers. But her mother's intimacy with the captain did not affect to tears, it roused to anger, even while a certain sense of the ridiculous, connected with it, often forced a smile, or even a laugh.

Both the captain and Mrs. Orde were middle-aged, her mother something more, both very stout, and, though remarkably handsome and pleasing—of that style which has nothing romantic about it—to throw a halo round the countless absurdities of love.

The capitaine, too, not a man of much tact, or very thorough-bred, presumed a good deal in the household, and even with Rosalie, on his influence over Mrs. Orde. It was understood that, though not quite of so ancient

and exalted a birth as his young friends, the baron and the comte, he was of more than respectable birth, and that, though his "papa and his mamma" still lived, were very wealthy, and he their only heir, he had already inherited a large fortune from an uncle, which he announced openly, if he found a lady equally wealthy and willing to take him, for better for worse, should be forthcoming in actual coin for her satisfaction, before the marriage day was fixed.

This was a curious and premature way of managing matters; but foreigners, as Mrs. Orde said, are so odd, and if he had the money in specie, so much the better. She had yet to inform him that the bulk of her property was a jointure, which she must resign should she ever marry again; but she felt so sure of the captain's real love for herself, that she had no doubt he would gladly marry her, even when by accepting him she was reduced to a poor two hundred a year.

Rosalie had one hope left, and that was, that the captain, whom she decided in her own heart to be a mere fortune-hunter, would not consider two hundred a-year a sufficient price for his showy person; that it might be some inducement she readily believed, but with her strong common sense she felt sure he would think all the more lightly of it, because he fully believed that all Mrs. Orde's present handsome income would be his own. As to his fortune in bags of ready money she had no faith in it all, and was prejudiced enough to feel certain, and to assure Miss Jenny, who readily believed the prophecy, that if the bags were forthcoming at all, they would be filled either with counterfeit or borrowed moneys.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CONFIDENCE OF TRUE LOVE.

To Jeannetta, the high-spirited, the independent, the devoted, it mattered very little what was Lady Beauchamp's reply to her mother's many anxious queries about the count and his friends: any disparaging, or questionable remark about her lover, the impas-

sioned girl was fore-resolved to attribute solely to envy and ill-will.

Not so Mrs. Orde: she was neither capable of the same faith in one object, or of the same independence of spirit and defiance of the world.

It was with great anxiety she expected, and with much trepidation that she received, a long-delayed but voluminous reply from Lady Beauchamp. She had quite resolved not to sanction a positive engagement until she was perfectly satisfied of the count's respectability, his fortune, his birth, and his character; like most rather weak, kind-hearted people, she was very fond of "half-measures," and did not see of how little use it was to keep her daughter's *hand* disengaged if she allowed her to become bound *heart* and *soul* to such a man as Gonzalve de Montfaucon!

Then, too, with regard to herself, although she felt a little shy about owning to the sister of her first husband that she meditated taking a second (that second a foreigner, five years at least her junior); and though she did not suppose that the Capitaine Crève-cœur was of sufficient importance to be known and identified as easily as the noble count or baron might be, still she was anxious to be assured of his respectability, and by being so, of that of his associates, since it was not likely that two "noblemen" would be on such intimate terms with him were he not all he professed and appeared to be.

An extract from Lady Beauchamp's letter will best explain the nature of Mrs. Orde's inquiries, and how she had suffered her own conquest to peep out, in spite of a sort of shame in broaching such a subject to her sister-in-law; vanity getting the better of delicacy, as that coarsest of female failings is sure to do, where it is undirected by the timidity of youth, or great natural tact.

After several pages filled with her own sorrows, losses, and disappointments, the estrangement and ingratitude of her daughters, and the avarice and insolence of her sons-in-law, Lady Beauchamp said, "I should have written long ago, but that I have only just received Augusta's cold and unsatisfactory answer to my pressing and minute inquiries about the reputed aspirant to

my dear niece's favour, the Count de Montfaucon. She merely says,—

“I should very much doubt there being anything serious in the attentions of the Count de Montfaucon to our dear Jeannetta. He is one of the proudest and most exclusive of the *ancienne noblesse* of France, and his mother was a Spaniard of even royal lineage! His individual character is, I hear, singularly proud and reserved. He is eminently handsome, in a style inherited from his mother, dark, stately, and scornful. His fortune is large, his position brilliant. I hear nothing against him but his extreme *hautour* and eccentricity, and, that his father and some of his relations were so peculiar in some things as to have been suspected of a touch of insanity.

“Still the proudest beauty in France would glory in such an alliance, and, therefore, dear mamma, I think he can only be amusing himself a little with the credulity of our ‘country cousin,’ whom it would be well to put on her guard. I hear the Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon has spent the last two or three years in travelling, and that some family misfortunes have seriously affected his health and spirits. The Baron de Saint Felix and the Captain Crèveœur are not known to the party who has given me this information; but I should say the intimacy of the haughty count was a sufficient guarantee for their being every way desirable as acquaintances. That my dear aunt will have to receive them in any other capacity, I for one must beg most obstinately to doubt; at the same time, I shall be very curious to hear how this extraordinary affair progresses, and beg you to give me the earliest information on the subject, the marquis being equally curious with myself about it, and, I may add, more than equally incredulous.’

“So much,” continued Lady Beauchamp, “for my daughter’s information on the point in question; of course, as all beautiful young women are rivals (cousins more especially so), she is no fair judge of the power of those attractions with which it would seem from your letter, you are *certain* Jeannetta has secured this brilliant match. I am so deeply interested in my niece’s welfare, and so anxious to promote whatever may tend to

her happiness and advancement in life, that I think of asking you to receive me for a week or two after the 20th instant. I am, as you know, dearest sister, much more a woman of this naughty, plotting, every-day world, than your sweet, simple, countrified self.

"I think my penetration, tact, and unenviable experience of the wickedness and wiles of men, may be of great service to my sweet, unsophisticated nieces at this crisis.

"I laughed heartily at your funny intimation of your own conquest. I dare say the wealthy captain you speak of has himself an eye to one of the girls, and is wooing the mother for the sake of the daughter. If he were some poor, penniless *refugee*, he might think even your own poor two hundred a-year (to which a second marriage would reduce you) a compensation for disparity of age, and other drawbacks; but so rich, so handsome, six years, at least, your junior, and in such society as his intimacy with the Count de Montfaucon announces him to be, it is too absurd to suppose he would give you the triumph of rejecting him. Of course I do not pay my poor departed brother so poor a compliment as to suppose you would ever give him a successor; nor have I any right to rank my sister so far below myself (as I must do) were I to believe she would do what no temptation has ever induced me to do, namely, to prove false to the dead, and to give a step-father to the children of that saint in heaven, my first and only love!"

Much more there was in this false and inflated strain, and violent and deep were the emotions with which Jeannetta and her mother perused and reperused the spiteful and hypocritical epistle.

"She must not, she shall not come here, dearest mamma. Her sole object is to break off my engagement with the count, to ruin my prospects, to destroy my happiness. Her envy, jealousy, and malignant ill-will are apparent in every line of that odious letter, and the venomous spite of my cousin is not less remarkable. There is but one comfort contained in that detestable epistle, and that extends only to you and Rosalie, for I am proud to say I needed it not, my faith in him being boundless and entire; but to you, and my doubting,

anxious sister, it must be delightful to learn how much greater even than he chose to represent himself is your Jeannetta's intended. I hope now, dearest mother, you will no longer object to the solemn and recognised betrothal, the pride of man is ever urging. I only wish that Rosalie could be persuaded not to stand so obstinately in her own light, but at least to tolerate the attention, and see if she cannot return the devoted attachment, of one who, to a thousand excellencies, adds that greatest of proofs that he is every way admirable—the being my Gonzalve's chosen friend."

Rosalie, who had been present during the perusal of her aunt's letter, and who had learnt, with mingled feelings, how great and desirable a match for her sister was the man she had so doubted and feared, only shook her head.

"Sister," she said, "I ought to congratulate you—I am sure your happiness, your welfare, your advancement, are a thousand times dearer to me than my own; it seems all is better than your most sanguine hopes could have foretold. Why, oh, why does my heart sink within me—why will the tears well forth, and the words of congratulation die upon my lips—why cannot I believe that this, the most devoted of LOVERS, will be to you, as I pray God he may, the best and truest of HUSBANDS? Oh! sister," she added, bursting into tears, "great, rich, noble, as it seems he is, how much rather would I see you the wife of poor Gerard Esdaile, than the countess of this stranger—Gerard, who has loved you from the cradle, whose faith, whose birth, whose habits are akin to yours—who would not take you to a distant land, perhaps to neglect and ill-treat you, but fix you in a sweet home, close to us, and love and honour you, as none but pious Englishmen can love and honour their wives. Ah, sister! he may not rival the count as a LOVER, but as a HUSBAND, oh, may you never regret him for yourself as passionately as I do for you."

"Rosalie," said Jeannetta, touched by her sister's deep emotion, even while offended for her lover, "Rosalie, this is the *last* time I can hear one word in disparagement of him to whom I am about formally to pledge my faith. I have no doubt that my noble Gonzalve will fulfil as a

HUSBAND all that his devotion as a LOVER gives me a right to expect. In these matters, sister, as you yourself fully prove, the heart of woman is her only umpire. I see not with your eyes, I judge not with your judgment, nor you with mine, else you would smile on the Baron de Saint Felix, and add the only link wanting, as my Gonzalve says, to the charm of his own happiness, that of seeing his friend happy too. But no; your heart is as untouched by the baron as mine is by our own good Gerard; and since you set me the example of prophesying, I will tell you, dear Rosalie, that my affection for you, like yours for me, seems gifted with a sort of second sight, and I believe the time will come (and that shortly too) when Gerard Esdaile will discover, what, I fancy, with all the devotion to me which you attribute to him, he has (more than once) suspected, how much more lovely, loving, and loveable, is the gentle *blonde*, than the stern (and to him, cold-hearted) *brunette*. When this *does* come to pass, I only hope that, settled down for life in a country village, confined to the dull monotonous routine of English rustic life, shut out from all intellectual and courtly pleasures, you may not find the unimpassioned LOVER degenerate into the surly, fault-finding HUSBAND, and bitterly regret, in your dull and dreary career, the brilliant destiny which awaited you, and which you rejected, as the Baroness de Saint Felix."

During Jeannetta's impassioned appeal, Rosalie changed colour more than once; until it was so plainly put to her by her sister she was not aware how much of love and hope was mixed with the thought of Gerard in her own heart.

She tried to laugh off the allusion—declared that there was no life like a single life—quoted Miss Jenny, and hastily retreated to her own room.

When she was gone, Jeannetta, too full at that moment of her own prospects to dwell long even on Rosalie's, said to her mother—

"Dearest mamma, we must meet cunning with cunning, and daring with daring—we must plot and counterplot, and defeat my aunt's plan. Luckily she has told us what day, to expect her; before that day, dearest, we .r

have left Brighton. It wants still ten days of the 20th, by that time let us be settled in London. You say you are resolved I shall enjoy one season with you and Rosalie before I marry, and I own I am so perfectly and intensely happy with Gonzalve as a *lover*, that I am in no unreasonable hurry to convert him into a *husband*, particularly as I fear the day that unites me to him will sever me from you and Rosalie. London is now, they say, full to an overflow. The first drawing-room will be held a fortnight hence. Let us be presented then, and do not answer Aunt Beauchamp's letter for a few days, when we can tell her that our approaching arrival in London will prevent our receiving her here. In London we can easily avoid any dangerous degree of intimacy with her. Her own engagements, and ours, the privilege of denying oneself, and the countless attractions the public places offer to such mere rustics as Lady Beauchamp considers us, all these things will be safeguards there; but here nothing would avail. Once in the house, there is no knowing where her envy and malignity would stop. So do, dearest mamma, in a case which so nearly concerns my happiness, let me have a voice, and on the 19th let us be in London—a sure way of preventing her being here on the 20th."

"Well, dearest," said Mrs. Orde, "you know I can never refuse you anything, and though I own I do not like to seem inhospitable to your aunt, yet *that* cannot weigh in the balance, if you really think she is bent on depriving you of the brilliant alliance which so completely eclipses her own daughters' much-vaunted matches."

"Of that I have not a doubt, dearest mamma. So it is agreed, on the 19th we go to London, and now," she added, with a bright blush, "Gonzalve and his English lesson await me; so farewell, dearest and best of mothers. I dare say you will not be down for some little time."

And, perhaps, with a hope that such might be the case, the beautiful and triumphant *fiancée* hurried down stairs.

"A few minutes," thought Mrs. Orde, "even Lady Beauchamp would not deny to engaged lovers, but a long *à-dieu* no wise mother would permit. I believe, as

my sister-in-law says, 'half the best matches in the world are broken off through too familiar an intercourse; but reserve on the part of the bride elect, and watchful chaperonage on that of her friends, never did anything but increase a lover's ardour, and make him hasten, as much as possible, the time when none can intrude, none interfere.' I dare say Jeannetta is quite right about her aunt's envy and evil designs against her brilliant establishment, but if I mistake not she is equally so against mine; and with all her devotion to the 'dead' (greater it would seem than to the 'living,' for she was not a very good wife), I fancy if Captain Crèvecoeur's fine person and property could be wheedled away from me, Lady Beauchamp would not let the memory of my poor brother-in-law stand in the way. Ah, well! I believe if ever a man really loved, Crèvecoeur loves me! and as it is pretty certain both my girls will marry, and leave me desolate and alone, why should I let a romantic scruple stand in the way of securing a brave protector and an accomplished intellectual companion for life; one too, whose fortune will more than double what I shall lose by forming a second marriage? Jeannetta, of course, will live principally abroad. My heart owns in secret that she is its darling. If I marry Crèvecoeur, I can settle near her; and it is Rosalie's own fault if she does not smile on the Baron de Saint Felix, and form one of a happy trio. Wonderful indeed that after so many years of obstinate widowhood, despising even in thought all second ties, I should be so easily won by this captivating Crèvecoeur. But what he says so naïvely is very true: we are not too old to marry, but we are too old to remain single any longer; and so I really think that I shall bring him to the point, and marry as soon as I see my two dear girls comfortably provided for."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A NEW CONQUEST.

THE impression made by Jeannetta on Colonel Pevensey had not passed away as rapidly as that fastidious connoisseur in female charms had possibly anticipated. He had met her frequently since the evening of Violet's *début*, walking, driving, and, better still, on horseback—a situation peculiarly calculated to show her off to the greatest advantage.

Devoted as she was, heart and soul, to her lover, the Count de Montfaucon, the great (and as he himself usually found them), the irresistible attractions of Colonel Pevensey not only failed to excite her admiration, but even escaped her notice.

This extraordinary indifference, not merely to his remarkable appearance, but to his evident admiration, piqued the noble colonel out of much of his *nonchalance*. He could not believe that any woman could remain indifferent if he deigned to exert himself to please. She might think it madness to indulge in any *penchant* for one apparently so unattainable;—she might look upon a passion for him as the sighing of the moth for the star: but surely nothing but opportunity on his part could be wanting; he had only to make her understand that she would not love *quite* in vain; and of course she, like so many, many others, as fair, and of far loftier birth and fortune, would be proud to be permitted to adore him. That foreigner, it was true, was ever by her side; but if he, Colonel Pevensey, chose to distinguish her, what chance had “a beggarly Frenchman” against the Honourable Colonel Pevensey, heir to an earldom, with so many annual thousands, and the finest person, and one of the most brilliant positions in England? It was too absurd!—no, he must get introduced, encourage her, dance, flirt, talk with her, and if she confirmed, on acquaintance, the impression she had made at first sight, if she did not “bore him,” was not over-fond or over-forward (when her first shyness wore off), if he found her at all *piquante*, in fact, if there was any excitement

in the pursuit, there was no knowing where the chase might end. Perhaps, after all, at the altar; but he could not tell; he could scarcely even take the trouble, in that stage of the affair, to ask himself how it was to end. But at any rate he was interested by her beauty, piqued by her indifference, and a little, a very little, in love—just enough to make him anxious to see her, and determined to be introduced to her.

Now in Colonel Pevensey's regiment there was a certain Captain Symons, a man born and bred a toady, and who had contrived, by flattery and assiduity, to make himself very agreeable and even necessary to the indolent and haughty colonel. Him, Colonel Pevensey forthwith consulted, and Captain Symons, who was himself a man of pleasure and gallantry, and passionately devoted to the fair sex, advised that the officers of the — Dragoons, with their noble colonel at their head, should give a ball to the ladies at Brighton; and that Colonel Pevensey and himself should pay Mrs. Orde and her lovely daughters the rare and flattering compliment of calling upon them and begging them to fix the day that would best suit their convenience and insure their presence.

"Bravo, bravo, Symons! 'pon my word you're a capital fellow—the grand Napoleon of the realms of flattery'—why, their heads will be quite turned. It's a compliment I never paid duchess or countess."

"No, colonel, because all the ladies of rank are pulling caps for you, without your troubling yourself. It's only these people who have never seen the inside of Buckingham Palace, or even polked at Almack's, that know not what it is to receive a second look from Colonel Pevensey; with them, you must lay it in pretty thick. But what matter if, after all, you find them not worth the trouble of courting—let them drop suddenly; what a smash it will be from the summit of your notice, and the world's envy, into the Slough of Despond and the mire of contempt and ridicule! I care not which, for my part; all that concerns me is to see you, dear colonel, even a little amused," and tears of plausibility stood in Captain Symons' light and prominent grey eyes.

"Well, Symons, you're a good fellow, and I'll take

your advice. Come, we'll call on these beauties, and I'll drive you in my phaeton. I must just step and see my darlings, and you go and order the carriage, there's a good fellow."

So saying, the colonel lounged away to the apartments of his children. But all coldness and *nonchalance* vanished when he found himself in the tight embrace of his noble boy and his loving little girl.

It was the hour of recreation; the children were just going out on their Shetland ponies. The boy, noble, handsome, with his father's perfect features, and his mother's delicate bloom, chesnut hair in abundant curls, and large dark eyes, and the little Clarissa with her long golden ringlets hanging below her waist, violet eyes, and a face and form of faultless beauty.

Eager as they had been before their father's entrance, to set out on an excursion long planned and eagerly anticipated, all other pleasures were merged in the far greater one of seeing him.

The boy pulled him down into an arm-chair, that he might hug him at his ease; and little Clarissa, climbing on a stool behind him, threw her arms round his neck and kissed the back of his head over and over again.

"Off, boy, you stifle me! My pet Clari, you are strangling poor papa—down, boy! down, Marmaduke! one would think you had not seen me for an age."

"It seems an age, dear papa," said the noble boy. "When are you going to ride with us again?" he asked. "It's very shabby of you to break your promise."

"Come now, come now, papa," said Clarissa; "do, there's a sweet pet. Come, if you will, I'll give you my new wax doll that Lady Burleigh sent me, with eyes that open and shut, and a tongue that moves about!"

"Nonsense, Clari; what could papa do with your doll? No, if he will come I'll lend him my new whip; and I'll let him spin my new top!" said the boy.

"Oh, you must come with us, papa," cried both at once, hugging and clinging to him.

"No, no—not to-day, dears!" said the father, delighted with their fondness; "not to-day, for I have business of importance."

"How I hate business!" said the little girl. "What use is it, papa?"

"Nonsense," said the boy. "You are only a silly little girl; but every gentleman has business to see to—I have."

"Oh, I dare say! And what, pray?"

"Why, it is my business to see Ponto fed; and to keep my knife sharpened; and not to let any boy bigger than cousin Charley bully him; and to take care of you, miss," he added, drawing himself up. "And it's my business to take old nurse her half-crown a week," he added; "and to feed the canary; and to water your geranium, Miss Clari!"

"And it's mine then, to be always running about and waiting upon you, sir," laughed the little girl. "But what is papa's business, that he cannot come with us over the downs, as he promised so long ago?"

"Nothing," thought the papa, "a bit more important in reality, than feeding Ponto, or watering a geranium. An idle flirtation, which may end in giving a worthless step-mother to these priceless treasures. But Captain Symons and the phaeton are at the door." And fondly embracing all his darlings, and renewing an old promise to take them to the play very soon, the fond father tore himself away sprang into the phaeton, and drove to Mrs. Orde's abode.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LOVE WITHOUT HOPE.

WHEN Colonel Pevensey and Captain Symons were ushered into the drawing-room of Mrs. Orde's house, they were a little "taken aback," to use a nautical expression, to find Mrs. Orde herself, busily engaged in teaching English, to the rather questionable, but very showy Capitaine Crèveccœur; Jeannetta, sitting on a sofa apart, reading Byron with the Count de Montfaucon; the Baron de Saint Felix, in a sulky fit by himself, copying music; and Rosalie engaged in earnest conversation with the beautiful young actress, Violet Woodville, whom the officers instantly recognized, and who, her

bonnet and shawl thrown aside, and one 'arm' round Rosalie's waist, seemed quite at home, and perfectly at her ease with the Ordes.

But if Violet was at ease with the kind old friends of former times, that ease seemed to vanish indeed, when the eye of Colonel Pevensey was fixed in haughty beauty upon her, so cold, so proud, and yet so arresting, and when she felt, rather than saw, that she was the object of an insolent, half-tender, half-defying stare, from the man she most loathed on earth, Captain Symons.

With the graceful ease of high-breeding, Colonel Pevensey soon explained to Mrs. Orde and her daughters, his flattering mission; and having politely extended his invitation to the gentlemen of the party, the foreigners, ever ready to respond to politeness, entered into conversation, and the whole party became animated. Jeannetta, charmed with Colonel Pevensey, for at once inviting her intended, exerted herself to please him; Captain Crèveœur was amusing and lively, though rather too forward, boasting, and boisterous, for our English notions, particularly those of such a thoroughbred man as Colonel Pevensey; the Baron de Saint Felix was melancholy, gentle, and reserved, but very grateful and winning. Mrs. Orde, highly flattered by so pointed an attention, from so distinguished a personage, accepted the invitation with delight, and named for the ball, the latest day her approaching departure permitted. Rosalie, delighted to find herself once more in the company of Englishmen, was all life, mirth, and grace. Violet alone sat silent and apart, conscious, almost for the first time, that she had chosen a profession, which, unless dignified by the most public and complete success, on the London boards, quite excluded its members from general society—poor Violet! at the very time that she made this discovery, and writhed under the impertinent, though passionate glances of Captain Symons, her heart made another fraught with anguish, mortification, and despair. Yes! as Violet stole a glance at Colonel Pevensey, and saw his beautiful eyes fixed in respectful admiration on the stately Jeannetta, she felt that, for such a glance from those eyes, she would gladly die; and her heart awoke at once to all the delicious agony

of passionate and hopeless love ; and Violet knew, at the same moment, that the intoxicating poison she imbibed was love, and that it was love without hope.

The approaching ball engrossed much of the conversation, and of the thoughts of the Ordes and their admirers. Jeannetta, it is true, only looked upon it as a new scene in which to enjoy the happiness and triumph of her Gonzalve's devotion. Mrs. Orde was pleased at the thought of again figuring at a ball with an all but acknowledged lover, and an all but affianced suitor. Rosalie anticipated a sort of pleasure in showing the "baron" her decided preference for her own countrymen, and poor Violet, who of course had no invitation to join the festive throng, indulged a mournful and morbid delight in discussing, with Rosalie and Jeannetta, all the particulars of the fête, because it constantly introduced the name it thrilled her very heart to hear, that of her soul's secret idol, the magnificent, the stately Colonel Pevensy.

It was about this time that the marked attentions to Jeannetta of that most fascinating and reputedly irresistible of men, began to excite feelings of uneasiness and jealousy in the Count de Montfaucon, and to make him press for a speedy termination of the anguish of suspense, by an immediate, and in some degree private, marriage.

This, however, Mrs. Orde opposed so determinately, and with such appeals to the love, duty, and gratitude of her favourite daughter, that Jeannetta, who had no wish herself to shorten the blissful season of courtship, bound herself by a promise to her mother, which no prayers or arguments of the count's could induce her to violate.

Though not by nature a coquette, she was not sorry to see, in the varying cheek and flushing eyes of her lover, his jealousy of her every glance, her every smile. She did feel a little elated when the mere appearance of Colonel Pevensy glanced up at her window, as he passed on horseback, could make a strong, proud, reserved man like the count tremble and turn pale.

"Will it be thus a year hence?" asked her anxious heart. "Is it ever thus with the HUSBAND?—and if not, why so hasten to resign the enchanting devotion of "LOVER?"

Meanwhile Colonel Pevensey had called two or three times, and each time had become more and more enamoured of the beautiful Jeannetta, who, while quite indifferent to his fascinations, took for the first time in life a coquettish pride in showing that he was not so to hers. Her *nonchalance* riveted his chain, and several circumstances conspired to make him seriously meditate, what Captain Symons (who foresaw the result) malignantly wished to bring about, a formal proposal.

Symons knew, with the instinct of one who overlooks the game, that Jeannetta was engaged heart, soul, and, as he strongly suspected, hand too, to the foreign count; but Symons was mean, envious, malignant, and longed to see the man he toadied, mortified. Symons had fallen desperately in love with poor Violet, a base and sensual passion, but still love, the only real, ardent, and miserable one he had ever known.

"He loved her with the accursed love
Of his accursed race."

And he knew, for he had seen her at the Ordes' every time he had accompanied his colonel there—he knew, by her timid glances, her changeful cheek, her "tremblings when met, and restlessness when left," her start at the mention of Colonel Pevensey's name, and her deep blush if he addressed her, that she loved the unattainable and splendid colonel with all a young girl's first, wild, and passionate tenderness, and all the imaginative and bewildering enthusiasm of the poetical temperament of genius. And genius that loves, however hopelessly, cannot love in silence; it must pour its burning anguish into song, and fling the mournful tributes at its idol's feet!

Violet, under the cloak of the strictest incognita, began to find her only solace in confessing, in verse, the passion of her soul, in hymning the praises of her cold, unconscious idol, and in feeling that, though their source was unknown and unsuspected, her passionate tributes met the eye, perhaps reached the heart, of him, she so wildly worshipped.

It was rapture to the gifted and enthusiastic girl, to think that his hand at least would touch the paper on

which she poured her burning words, to which she pressed her impassioned kisses, and which she wore in her bosom, because it was to go to him.

Now these verses were, in spite of their deep and earnest tenderness, full of all the delicate timidity of a young girl's heart. They were tributes a monarch might have been proud of receiving—proofs of a love the noblest would have gloried in inspiring.

Colonel Pevensey had quite taste and judgment enough to appreciate their delicacy of sentiment and their elegance of expression, and even he had not so often inspired such enthusiasm in such a heart and mind, as not to feel a little elated by such a proof of his power.

Captain Symons happened to be present, when the first of the beautiful, delicate, and timid confessions of a love whose depth and purity every line revealed, was put into his colonel's hand.

As he read, with heightened colour and dilated eye, Symons watched, with a cold, malignant scrutiny; a scent the paper exhaled, instantly reminded him of that Violet Woodville habitually wore, and jealousy curdled his very heart's blood.

Colonel Pevensey's first impulse was to put up the letter, and say nothing; but meeting Symon's mocking eye and hearing him say forthwith, "A woman's hand, by Jove, colonel! Some enamoured milliner, or sentimental abigail transcribing a valentine, or copying a sonnet out of the *Lady's Magazine*?"

Colonel Pevensey was weak and vain enough to say,—
"Nay, these lines come from a lady, and a genius, or I am no judge of either. I know no one half clever enough to have indited them; but be she who she may, I am not a little proud of having inspired one so gifted!"

As he spoke he handed them to Captain Symons, who felt an instant and strong conviction that they came from Violet; but forthwith adroitly contrived to instil into Colonel Pevensey's mind a notion that Jeannetta was their authoress.

This idea was peculiarly agreeable to Colonel Pevensey, whose *amour-propre* had been not a little wounded, at the apparent indifference and *nonchalance* of the only

woman in whom he felt any interest, or whom he was at all anxious to captivate.

For the sake of having this pleasing impression confirmed, he constantly showed to Captain Symons all the exquisite and touching effusions of the same gifted and enamoured being; and by his subtle arguments and welcome persuasions, was not only induced seriously to contemplate proposing to Jeannetta, but prevented attaching the slightest interest or importance to the timid glances and ever-varying hues of Violet's eloquent cheek.

Colonel Pevensey, in his sublime consciousness of his own irresistible power, backed by the wily hints and innuendoes of Captain Symons, had almost made up his mind to entrance his enamoured correspondent by a soft confession, and possibly even a bewildering hint of the astounding possibility of a proposal!

The approaching ball he considered to be a good opportunity of increasing his influence and her adoration; and he was sufficiently in love to feel a flutter at the heart as he thought of the coming ball, which no festival, however brilliant or aristocratic, had for many years caused in this "admired of all beholders."

While the officers were exhausting their ingenuity and their resources, to make this ball the delight of all the invited and the envy of all the excluded, the ladies were doing the same with regard to their dresses. Nothing could surpass the elegance of matronly splendour prepared for Mrs. Orde, or the brilliant freshness of the white ball-dresses and wreaths (exactly alike) in which the sisters were to appear at their first public ball.

Poor Violet, as she beheld the dresses when first they issued from the "wicker idols" the objects of so much mysterious worship among the fair, and such dread among their husbands, her eyes slowly filled with tears, for she remembered before whom Jeannetta would shine in the exquisite array she helped her to try on, and thought, too, that but for her own choice of a profession, she might have shared the delights of such a ball, for Mrs. Orde would not have scrupled to chaperone the unknown Violet Woodville, though of course to offer to introduce the actress was impossible.

It was the very night before the ball, the ladies and their lovers were practising polkas, *valse à deux temps*, and schottisches, and Violet, not that night engaged at the theatre, was playing for their benefit all the newest airs, when a carriage drove up to the door, a loud rat-tat-tat shook the street door and thundered through the house, the ladies, panting, disengaged themselves from their partners' arms—Jeannetta's prophetic heart foretold what the next moment revealed—the door was thrown open, and to the annoyance, the surprise, and dismay of all the ladies, with affected security of welcome, and assumed tenderness and joy, rushed in the dreaded, disliked, and unwelcome Lady Beauchamp!

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SISTER-IN-LAW.

LADY BEAUCHAMP, like all very clever people, had the power of making herself extremely agreeable when she wished to conciliate, and eminently detestable when her object was to annoy.

In the present instance, for some reason or other, doubtless (for she never did anything without a reason), she assumed a frankness, a *laissez-aller*, and an affectionate cordiality perfectly bewitching to strangers, and which was so admirably assumed, as to cheat even those who knew her but too well, into the idea that she was an altered being—as if a wily, coquettish worldling of fifty ever did alter, or as if any full-grown human creature was ever known to change, except, indeed, under the purifying, the hallowing, the ennobling influence of that Spirit which can wash away all stains, however deep their dye, restore the first whiteness of the soul, and fill with a new, a simple, and a Christian heart, even the vain bosom of an elderly coquette.

This Spirit Lady Beauchamp did not even affect to possess at the present moment, more than through all her antecedent career of interested and ambitious vanity. Of course had she been questioned on the subject, she would have proclaimed herself a Christian; and because

she had been baptized in that faith, she would have professed herself a member of that purest and most unworldly branch of the Christian religion, the holy Protestant Church; but her protest against the sins and vanities of this wicked world, was made from the most softly-cushioned and conspicuous pew of the most fashionable church in town during its season, or that of the most modish watering-places during theirs. It flowed over carefully tinted lips, and was read from a gemmed and gilded "Church Service" in which (the golden and jewelled clasp undone) the first record that met the eye in the book of *truth*, was the false name of "Eleanor Beauchamp," and a miniature and highly finished coat of arms!—blazoned as if in defiance of the meek confession of "being by nature born of *sin*, and the child of wrath," and as if the tracing a vain and wicked race back to a dissolute Norman robber, a barbarous Saxon, or an idolatrous Dane, could do away with the simple pedigree that takes us all back "to gardener Adam and to housewife Eve."

The young easily believe that what *seems* to be *is*, and so Rosalie and Jeannetta—though the former had much shrewd common sense, and the latter, with the egotism of love, had been at first very impatient of any intrusion on her intercourse with her Gonzalve—were won over to believe that the great matches her own daughters had made had set her heart and mind at rest on their account, and when she smiled and said:—

"While Louisa and Augusta were single, my sweet nieces! I was a little jealous of charms which I felt might eclipse theirs; but now that each has worn her coronet, I should feel with Othello my occupation gone, if I had not two beauties still *à marier*, and who, perhaps, unlike my own thankless girls, may not quite forget me, even in all the bustling vanity and egotistical importance of a new and grand establishment. Jeannetta, she would say, "has brought down her earl without any help of mine; but Rosalie, who scorns a baron, must commission aunty to look her out some young, handsome, wealthy British peer, that we may see whom the coronet and ermine most become—my Louisa, or my Rosalie!"

"Ah, dear aunt," said Rosalie, playfully embracing

her, "give yourself no trouble in tuft-hunting on my account—

" 'Along the cool sequestered vale of life,
I'll keep the noiseless tenor of my way.'

Leave coronets and ermine to stately, dark-eyed, black-browed beauties like Jeannetta, Louisa, and Augusta: I have no height to carry off velvet trains and ermined robes—gems were lost in my light hair—a muslin dress and a wreath of wild flowers for me—my favourite singers are the nightingale and thrush, the linnet and the lark—the concerts I love best, I can listen to from some sweet jasmine bower, lighted by the silver moon, and the cool evening breeze laden with the breath of every sweetest flower fanning my cheek, and waving my hair. Those are the concerts for me!"

"And yet," said Jeannetta, "you very nearly fainted, Miss Rosalie, with delight and excitement when first you heard Jenny Lind."

"Capital!" said the aunt. "How do you explain that, sweet niece?"

"Why, many fainted on that same occasion," said Rosalie, "but not from so romantic a cause; I believe the intense heat, the unspeakable crush, the clamour, the uproar, all might account for the swoon of a mere country girl; although I do own, that for the sake of the sweet Nightingale of the North even I can bear with patience to be pushed and jostled, crushed and elbowed, by a dense mob of the *well*-born and the *ill*-bred—to breathe an air that seems to scorch the lungs, and which, if analyzed by Faraday, I do believe would be pronounced a mephitic acid gas, akin to poison—to be stunned by the rapturous, clamorous applause of those by nature and habits *nonchalants*, scornful, and *blasés*, and whom Jenny Lind alone has power to persuade they are not quite 'used up!' For her sweet sake, even I can bear all this; but for nothing less than Jenny Lind would I willingly exchange the concerts of the 'season in the country' for those of the 'season in town.' But the Nightingale of the North is, they say, caught in rosy bonds, and caged in a golden cage, and love, the great monopolist, is alone henceforth to know what music can be, and how much

the song of a daughter of earth, can be like what we fancy might be that of an angel in heaven."

"There, aunt," said Jeannetta, "you would not expect that from such a quiet, demure little rustic as Rosalie seems: you will awaken no worldly ambition in her, believe me—she might fall in love with a poet, but never, I believe, with a peer."

"No," laughed Rosalie, "a title has no charm for me."

"Except a title to orders," slyly suggested Lady Beauchamp.

Why did a deep crimson blush suffuse the fair brow, cheek, and bosom of Rosalie? why did her ready wit forsake her, her form tremble, her lip quiver, and her eyes fill with tears?

Lady Beauchamp read, in that emotion, the secret of her heart and the story of her life; but, with matchless tact, she appeared to see nothing but a gay sail, shining in the sun and swelling in the breeze; and Jeannetta, while her aunt spoke, had recognised her lover's step on the stairs, and, engrossed by her own emotion, what was Rosalie's to her? Jeannetta was a fond sister—but all lovers are egotists.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BALL.

THE grand ball, given by the Honourable Colonel Pevensy and the officers of his regiment, filled the empty heads and hollow hearts of almost every beau and belle invited (or uninvited) to figure away on the chalked floors of the ——— Rooms. Ladies seemed to think it a foretaste of Paradise to be allowed, with waists laced in to agony, and feet squeezed up to torture, to pant in unpaid finery, over-dressed and over-heated, through a succession of romping polkas, schottisches, and sauteuses with moustached and whiskered fops, entirely taken up with their own charms, who drawled, in monosyllables, a few platitudes about the heat, the music, Jenny Lind, and the bore of this thing or that. Beaux, sick at heart with envy of the officers' gay uniforms, exhausted their slender imaginations, and, in some instances, their slender

purses too, in as much finery as the *costume bourgeois* admits of—richly-laced ties, embroidered and jewel-studded shirts, waistcoats of white satin, literally embossed with gold and silver, glittering chains, rings, and shirt-pins. Everything that could be done was done—and done, as usual, in vain; nothing can give elegance or splendour, taste or grace, to the costume of the gentlemen of the nineteenth century. The officers, as is always the case, first cut them out, and then “cut them up.” Very handsome men, in plain clothes, could hardly get very ugly women to dance with them; while the plainest little officers present were eagerly accepted by first-rate beauties. Oh, what jealousies and heart-burnings were there—what disorder inside those heads so trimly curled outside! Heartless girls looked coldly on their affianced lovers, if their charms had obtained a condescending glance, or a protecting smile from the proud and handsome Pevensey, a bold stare from the tall and elegant Captain Travers, a soft smile from the light and brilliant Vernon, or any kind of notice or attention from any man in a gay uniform, and with that inexplicable martial grace and *tournure* none but military men possess.

Even Gonzalve de Montfaucon, though he suffered less by the comparison than any other *en habit bourgeois* at that ball, even he was deemed by none, but his adoring Jeannetta, equal in beauty to Colonel Pevensey himself, and far superior to any other man present. He who in a similar, or, indeed, in any uniform, would have won all the frivolous hearts at that ball, was scarcely deemed worth a second look, though dressed in the perfection of quiet and gentlemanly taste.

Yes, Jeannetta herself admitted, for the first time, the very great and noble beauty of Colonel Pevensey, and the brilliant and elegant effect of regimentals in a ball-room—and then she remembered with pride that her Gonzalve too was a soldier, and figured to herself how he would surpass them all in his own rich uniform.

Captain Crèveœur and the Baron de Saint Felix, generally the pets of the fair and the idols of the ball-room, were in a smothered rage, which vented itself in muttered curses, among which “Sacre!” and “Ces

diabiles d'officiers Anglais!" might be heard by any who took the trouble to listen.

Slighted by the younger belles, and being unable to obtain any tolerably pretty or fashionable partners, they devoted themselves to those who had seen officers enough to know they were but men, and sometimes vain and frivolous men too; and the Baron de Saint Felix and Captain Crèveœur, both capital dancers and desperate flirts, spent the evening in "cultivating," as Pevensey said, "two wall-flowers." Pretty clever and agreeable women certainly, and one of them (Mrs. Orde) thinking herself entitled to all his devotion,—the other determined, if possible, to rob her sister-in-law of what she considered a wealthy prize and valuable conquest.

Lady Beauchamp, however, took good care not to let her sister-in-law perceive any of the soft and furtive smiles with which she repaid the flirting Crèveœur's sly glances of admiration. She knew that however wealthy a Frenchman may be himself, he always expects corresponding riches in the object of his choice, and had arrayed herself on this occasion quite sumptuously. All the Beauchamp diamonds (very fine ones too) were put in requisition; and though her neck and arms were the neck and arms of a fashionable London chaperone, and those of Mrs. Orde were lovely as ever in their snowy *embonpoint*, the captain's eyes rested much oftener on her ladyship's than on Mrs. Orde's, for brilliants, which he knew to be of the first water, sparkled on the one, and only a slight gold chain and bracelets of her daughters' hair, with their miniatures as clasps, adorned the other.

Mrs. Orde was so good-humoured and unsuspecting, and Lady Beauchamp was so adroit and sly, that the captain's interested inconstancy escaped all notice, except that of the quiet but quick-witted Rosalie, who perceived, with pleasure, a chance of being rid of a detestable, false, foreign father-in-law, and resolved to make the most of her aunt's possessions and expectations in the hearing of Captain Crèveœur.

As for the baron, having been slighted by Rosalie, who was very fond of dancing, and in great request among the officers, both for her beauty, her *naïveté*, and her light and graceful manner of flying, as it were, through

the polka and the schottische, and gliding through the waltz and quadrilles, he affected a sort of *dépit amoureux*, and took upon himself to sulk with her the whole evening.

She was very glad of an opportunity of proving to the world in general, and to himself in particular, that he was nothing to her, and that she never intended he should be anything but a hopeless adorer. Rosalie was honoured several times with Colonel Pevensey's hand, a distinction which made her the envy of the choicest belles of the evening, and which she owed to his finding, to his unspeakable surprise, that Jeannetta was not at all ready to accept his half-scornful attentions, but was bent on enjoying to the full one of the most exquisite pleasures this dull life yields—a first ball with her first and only love.

Ah, those who cannot love escape much anxiety, much anguish, much misery, but they lose the only ecstasy the heart can know, the only bliss at once bewildering and absorbing. Jeannetta alone perhaps among those hundreds of "fair women and brave men" floated through the mazes of the dance, scarcely conscious that her feet touched the earth, while her soul seemed to have soared into an ambrosial Eden. His eyes were on her blushing cheek—she knew it, she felt it, though the consciousness of too intense a happiness made her veil her own tearful orbs beneath

"The lids whose jetty fringe
Kissed her soft cheek's blooming tinge."

His voice was in her ear, whispering words of passionate admiration and tender love. His arm was round her waist, and slightly as it encircled her, it seemed to bear her from all the common cares and coarse realities of life, into some region of boundless rapture and ineffable delight.

Colonel Pevensey, who was fast becoming as much in love with Jeannetta, as such a man commonly is with any woman, could only explain her conduct by an idea, suggested by the wily Symons, that she wished to awaken jealousy, who in the human heart is ever ready to fan the flame of love; and to be revenged on her for presuming to play off any womanly devices on his august self, Colonel Pevensey devoted himself a good deal to Rosalie.

Her freshness, her *naïveté*, and her arch sincerity, amused, and (as he said to Symons) refreshed his spirit, parched by the arid monotony of the conversation of fashionable women; then, too, though "not the rose" (the rose of his fancy, at least), "she had dwelt near it;" and as Rosalie admired the colonel extremely, and would gladly have seen Jeannetta united to him, instead of to the count (a foreigner, a Roman Catholic, and to her thinking, a mysterious and very inexplicable character), she talked freely with him about her sister, reciprocated his admiration of her beauty, extolled her temper, her goodness, her talents, and told him many little traits of the sweet simplicity of her nature and the warm tenderness of her heart.

To these the colonel listened with an interest scarcely concealed by his habitual *nonchalance* and *hauteur*, for he was thinking of his sweet Clarissa and his darling boy, and that such a woman might perhaps be above all mean and selfish jealousies, and act as a mother to his loved and lovely children.

"Is your sister fond of children?" asked Pevensey, in a tone so indifferent that none could have guessed that his proud heart actually trembled for Rosalie's reply.

"Oh yes—absurdly so," laughed his gay partner, "only she spoils them; she cannot bear to see them weep—not even those silly tears 'forgot as soon as shed.' I have known her stop in the street an hour, and in the rain too, to quiet with *bonbons*, caresses, or anything she could think of, some little wilful squaller, whose monotonous and causeless noise only irritated me, as it did every one else, and who, seeing there was something to be got by crying, yelled the louder for every *bonbon* he received or espied. Oh, she dotes on children!"

"I am very glad of that," said Colonel Pevensey, almost thinking aloud.

"Why?" asked Rosalie.

"Oh!" and he half laughed, and quite blushed, "because I mean to ask your good mamma's leave to bring my little darlings to see her. It is such a great advantage to motherless children like mine to be a good deal with amiable and accomplished women."

"To be a good deal with!" thought Rosalie. "Unless

he means a great deal, he makes very sure of one's readiness to be troubled probably with two spoilt, conceited, aristocrats ; but he is their father, and I like him all the better for fancying they must be welcome." And so she said : " We shall be delighted to see them and to show them any attention in our power ! "

The colonel seemed for a moment a little startled at the air of independence and protection, with which a mere nobody, in his estimation, spoke of the honour he intended to confer, in allowing his " little Plantagenets " to associate with her family, but he checked himself and said : —

" Have you ever seen my Clarissa and my Marmaduke ? "

" I have," replied Rosalie, simply, but *avec intention* ; " at least if a little girl and boy, who ride very pretty and very small Shetland ponies are yours, as I was told they were."

" Possibly they might be," said the colonel coldly, very angry and very much amazed in his own heart, that Rosalie should not have expressed any of the admiration his children's beauty generally excited, or burst into the raptures most ladies did when speaking of them to him.

" Of course," continued Rosalie, " I cannot be certain about it ; there are so many children and so many Shetland ponies at Brighton now, and they all dress so much alike, and look so much alike—so wild and rosy."

This was more than Pevensey could bear ; the idea of his exquisite, high-born children looking like all the other little chubby plebeians at Brighton was too much.

" I fancy you have not seen my children," he said haughtily ; " but—the music ceases. Allow me to lead you to your mamma ; I am obliged to hand Lady Manvers down to supper, a disagreeable point of etiquette."

" Oh, not at all," smiled Rosalie, " for she seems a very sensible, motherly kind of woman ; and as to children, you will find her more at home than I am, for she stops every fat baby in its nurse's arms, to ask its age, and its name, and how many teeth it has cut ; and every troop of children—ruddy children on the downs—come in for a share of her caresses and sugar candy—"

" You know her ladyship then ? "

"Oh, yes, the Earl of Manvers is a sort of connexion of ours—but see, she is putting on her shawl. Fly to assist her. I can take care of myself."

Colonel Pevensey was much annoyed. He meant to check Rosalie's impertinence, and impose on her by his assumption of grandeur; and so he had entailed upon himself the bore of handing down a "motherly woman," in a huge turban, a ferocious front, with a purple face, a yellow dress, a short waist, and a red China crape shawl. A connexion of the Ordes too—and Rosalie saw through it all, as he perceived by the sparkle of her eye and the curl of her lip.

The fat and amiable Countess of Manvers, who had expected no such rigorous attention to etiquette, was in high good humour, when the arm of Colonel Pevensey was presented to her as haughtily as politeness permitted.

She was pleased with the attention, certainly, for acknowledged precedence is dear to every female heart; but she was a good deal in awe of the sarcastic and dignified colonel, and that feeling was the alloy all worldly enjoyment must contain.

Lady Manvers was a *parvenue*; forty years before, those who saw the most perfect Hebe that even Ireland itself ever produced, pronounced that Lord Manvers could produce a very "fair excuse" for a very silly match, Lady Manvers having been nothing more nor less than a Dublin innkeeper's daughter; but now that, like so many other Irish beauties, she had fattened out of all symmetry of feature and of form, and reddened out of all delicacy of complexion and transparency of skin, everybody marvelled what miracle had placed a coronet on her low brow; but she wore her honours so meekly and good-humouredly, and had borne through all the trials of a bad husband, and a hundred adorers, so spotless a fame, that she was very popular as a chaperone, a patroness, and a matchmaker. Her conversation and her behaviour, even after forty years, still showed at once a ludicrous conjunction and contrast—Mary O'Flaherty and the Countess of Manvers—the innkeeper's daughter and the lady of an earl—the good-humour natural to her as an Irishwoman, and the complaisance once

habitual to her as "Mary, the maid of the inn," and the pride she found to be necessary and the reserve she tried hard to assume, as Mary Countess of Manvers!

"I'm sure, colonel," she said, smiling and bridling, "all the young ladies will be vexed with me, for engrossing the attentions of their favourite beau. Next to the possession of Colonel Pevensey's hand, I fancy they covet that of his arm." And as she spoke, one forgave the unconquerable brogue, for the sake of the still sweet smile which revealed a very even set of little, white teeth. "Not but what of course," she added, remembering her dignified position as the lady of the highest rank present, "we, colonel, must not set the fashion of neglecting the etiquette of society, nor to please others or even ourselves forget what we owe to our rank and station. And yet I'm sorry for the poor girls—nobodies, most of them, but very pretty nobodies, I'm sure. Why, there are only the Ordes that I can see, with a drop of blude richer than that of a recent baronet or a city knight; and they're but distantly related to us—we have to go a long way back to trace it!"

"So much the better," thought Colonel Pevensey. "How few of the present day can go very far back with any degree of certainty!" And then remarked, with an equivocal smile, "Who would not go a long way, my dear countess, to prove himself related to you?"

"Thank you, colonel," said the unsuspecting lady (nothing doubting), and in the warmth of her Irish heart, squeezing the cold, white, patrician hand of the haughty and astonished colonel. Then having remarked how much he had danced and talked with Rosalie Orde, and thinking to reward him for his unwonted and (to her) inexplicable urbanity, she beckoned Rosalie towards her with a smiling eagerness, in which "Mary O'Flaherty" triumphed over "the countess;" and in the same spirit, with a strong and dexterous tug and jerk, worthy of an arm and hand once famous for their skill in shaking feather beds at "The Shamrock," she forced Rosalie into a seat on the other side of Colonel Pevensey, thus upsetting a series of dexterous manœuvres and condescending bows with which he had induced Jeannetta and the count to move towards that enviable seat.

"Miss Rosalie Orde's something of a pet and *protégée* of mine, colonel!" she said, assuming what she meant to be an atoning dignity of manner; "and one day I'll get her a gude husband!—that is, if she minds her p's and q's; your p's especially, my luve!" she added in an audible whisper, "for P stands for Piviney."

The colonel's haughty lip was curled with a sneer, but Rosalie's irrepressible laugh was so infectious, that he could not but join in it; and the sight of the proud colonel sharing a hearty laugh with the *parvenue* countess and the merry Rosalie astounded all the would-be exclusives at the table, and made mirth and good humour the fashion for the rest of the evening.

The laugh they shared so cordially together having re-established a good understanding between Colonel Pevensey and Rosalie, they talked merrily on together; the sunny smiles of Rosalie thawed the ice of the colonel's proud reserve. An arch, and yet simple woman, who says whatever comes into a shrewd head, and a kind, pure heart, is always more likely to subdue a proud, and warm a cold nature, than any artificial or affected character, however great her experience or consummate her tact.

The countess, whose matchmaking was a little in the primitive style of Mrs. Primrose's (when trying to catch the squire for her Olivia), whispered to the colonel that she was sure darlint little Clarissa and sweet Marmadook would doat on that fine-tempered creature. "There's something in her, colonel," she added, "that reminds me uncommonly of the first Mrs. Pevensey, sweet soul; her sister's a noble-looking girl, it's true—a perfect Juno; but my sweet, fair, feminine Rosalie's the Venus of Medicis—and Mars and Venus all the world over—the bold and the gentle, the proud and the humble, the dignified and the captivating!"

"I do not think Miss Rosalie Orde at all to compare to her stately, black-browed sister, my dear countess," said the colonel, who, having taken a few bumpers of excellent champagne, was a little less frigidly reserved than usual.

"Ah, you min! you min!" said her ladyship, "when did you ever prize the smile you've won, like that you've yet the trouble of winning? But let me tell

you, colonel, Jeannetta Orde, to my thinking, shall give no heart to you, for I fancy she's none left; she wears in her bosom an amulet even against your proud and irresistible charms, my dear Colonel Pivnsey, and that's first, true love. Come, I'll wager you a dozen of gloves, and another dozen of sillery, you'll never make the least impression on Jeannetta Orde!"

The spice of coxcombry which is mixed up in the nature of every man, however haughty, or however humble, was excited by this challenge. Colonel Pevnsey had, at that very moment, close to his proud heart, a letter received just before he set out for the ball, and of which he had not the slightest doubt Jeannetta was the writer: it breathed a love so passionate, so devoted, and yet so pure, and its language was that of a humility so touching, and a hopelessness so sad, that while it fed the flame Jeannetta's charms had already raised, it fanned, in a still greater proportion, the ineffable *hauteur* and self-esteem of the colonel.

For a moment, a thought of putting that letter in the countess's hand flitted through his head (a little giddy with champagne and adulation); but the thought was no sooner conceived than dismissed—even wine could not make Colonel Pevnsey one iota less the gentleman, or rob him of his chivalrous delicacy of feeling, and the dignified reserve of his nature.

"Well, colonel," she said, "are you afraid to accept my challenge?—say half a dozen of each?"

"The amount of the wager does not terrify me, my dear countess; and were the world one entire and perfect chrysolite, as Othello says, and all my own, it would not be too much to stake for the love of such a woman as I believe Miss Orde to be—but

" 'If she be not fair for me,
What care I how fair she be?'"

"Well, I'm glad you own she is not fair for you—you men are so conceited, and such boasters, you fancy all are fair for you, and you all brag of many conquests you niver made."

The colonel's answer to this was a cold stare of haughty

surprise at the countess's vulgar assurance and impertinent familiarity.

Lady Manvers drew herself up. Mary O'Flaherty remembered she was the Countess of Manvers—she was not going to be put down by a stare from a mere honourable.

"Well, colonel," she said, "if you'll take my advice, you'll—

"Forego the petty pride of giving pain,
Nor think that conquest justifies disdain."

Make up to Rosalie—many think her prettier than her sister, and I can answer for it she's twenty times more amiable. The only advantage Jeannetta has on her side is, that the one you can get, and the other you cannot. Come, you do want a pretty wee wife, to sit by you in your phaeton, and head your table—to take care of your sweet Clarissa, and nurse you when you're old or ailing. Come, if you won't take the trouble of wooing yourself, let me woo for you; I'll soon bring her to the point, colonel!"

"Really your ladyship takes an interest and a trouble about my concerns which is more than I desire or deserve. I beg that the names of these ladies may never again be mentioned between us. If I were disposed to play the wooer, I should not do it by proxy, and there are very few ball-room misses, believe me, who have much chance of sitting by my side, or at my table, or of having the charge of my little ones!"

So saying, he turned from the irate and purpling countess to the quiet Rosalie. The Irish blood of Mary O'Flaherty boiled in her veins, and the acquired pride of the countess made her turban plumes quiver; but native good humour shed its oil over the troubled waves of her bosom.

"Well," she thought, "if I've ruffled him to give her an opportunity of smoothing him, it's all well. Nothing becomes a woman like the character of a comforter, and admiration is never so welcome as when one's been jist put out of conceit with oneself. It was jist after Paddy had slighted me, and offended me by dancing with Norah Macnamara, that I accepted the offer of the half-tipsy

Earl of Manvers, and became a countess and an unhappy woman. I dare say I'll be at their widding yet, and then I'll have my rivinge in laughing well at him, and a better rivinge I cannot have, for he's like poor old Abbé Vieillecour, who used to come and drink sugar and water—'*eau sucré*,' as he called it—at 'The Shamrock,' and taught me French on the sly for a few lumps of sugar now and then, stolen for him from mother's tea-chest. '*Je crains le rire moqueur plus que la mort*,' he would say, when the wild Irish lads laughed and jisted at his powder, his pig-tail, his bows, and his scrapes,—and so I fancy does the colonel. The old abbé and 'The Shamrock!' What takes my thoughts back to those old times? Why do I think of father and mother (long ago dust), and whom I once so studied to forget, as a disgrace to the Countess of Manvers? Why would I give all my jewels, all my pracadence, and my rank and titles, to be again light-hearted Mary O'Flaherty, with a father and a mother to love, and to love her? Why do I wish I'd forgiven Paddy Roche for flirting with Norah Macnamara, and married him, and settled near father and mother, and comforted them, and been proud of them, instead of shunning and being ashamed of them? Poor mother! poor father! how they loved and cherished, and petted me! and how I repaid them! Ashamed of them! Ah! I've lived to be ashamed of myself for it. But what's the use of sighing?—

“‘When time is on the wing,
Can we prevent its flying?
Then merrily, merrily sing—
Tra, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Tra, la, la, la, la, la, la.’

But somehow it's in the gayest scenes I'm most depressed; when the present seems most brilliant, the past comes sweeping over my heart. I'm thought a merry, good-humoured, happy woman; I've brought no stain on the proud name I'm wedded to; I've no crime, as the world calls it, to charge myself with: but yet there's an eternal regret, an undying remorse in my bosom, and, like the snake that warmth strengthens to bite, that remorse generally awakes in my breast in scenes of light, and warmth, and splendour—the remorse of having

slighted in my grandeur those that so cherished me in my mean estate. Oh that I, who would now give ALL for one kiss from my poor mother, one kind word from father, could ever gallop, in my gay coroneted carriage, through Dublin, lest they should see me, and blush at any allusion to their poor but honest name!"

The countess's reverie had filled her eyes with tears, and her heart with the "long ago." How little did any, who knew her origin, and envied her elevation, dream of what was passing in the bosom (once so fair, though fair no more) on which sparkled the celebrated Manvers diamonds—

"Wise judges are we of each other!"

Everybody fancied Lady Manvers the merriest and happiest of those lucky *parvenues*, on whose low brows some mischievous destiny has pitched a coronet; everybody thought that she had but one tender point, one source of bitterness—her low origin, her mean parentage—and in a general way this was true.

And yet in all good hearts, so strong are the ties of blood, so ineffaceable is the instinct of filial tenderness and devotion, so eternal the memory of the kind parents of our childhood, and so bitter the remorse for slighting their love, and shunning their tenderness, that Mary, Countess of Manvers, would, as we have seen, have given all the world so envied her, and which for many years had been her *all* indeed, to be Mary O'Flaherty once more, with nothing of ingratitude or false unfilial shame and base neglect wherewith to reproach herself. And such we do believe is the case with all who have not valued (while they possessed it) at its great, great price, the exquisite tenderness and the unspeakable love of a father, and more still—a mother!

Oh, when the vain and bustling world forsakes, and the false light of youth fades from, the landscape of life—when, by the searching lamp of truth which memory's stern hand holds so perseveringly before the fading eyes of middle life or of old age, we shall scrutinize the past,—what blots, what ineffaceable blots on our lives will seem every unkind and undutiful word, what ghastly, gaping wounds every unfilial act or deed! How will the solitude

which awaits us all, if we live to be old, be haunted by the gentle remonstrance, the reproachful eye, the once unheeded but then harrowing appeal of the *first* lips we loved, and the *last* (whatever intermediate affections may have bound us)—the *last* whose smile we shall long to see again! And if the tenderest, the most dutiful, the most devoted child, can never think of her mother in her grave, without many a sigh for sorrow caused her, and many a passionate regret for some slight shown, or some wrong done, what must be the horrible remorse of the vain, yet not all heartless daughters (and the world is full of such) who, in the blinding, engrossing, and bewildering “battle of life,” the paltry struggle for precedence, and the mean ambition to *seem* rather than to *be*, have shunned and scorned the one friend that nothing could estrange, the guardian angel of the morning of life, a good, a tender mother!

There is so unequal a division of the gifts of life! In nature, the morning sun may be brighter and warmer, but that of evening is richer and more mellow—not so with us; we begin life so rich in its best treasures; spirits unsubdued by suffering; health unimpaired by sickness of soul or body; beauty fresh from “nature’s cunning hand;” powers unexhausted by vain attempts at success (the very exercise of which is a sort of happiness); the delicious power to please and to win; and, more enchanting still, to be pleased and to be won! Confidence in others—confidence in ourselves; friends in lavish abundance (the young have so many friends)—all the sweet relations of life unimpaired, and from “love’s shining circle no gem dropped away.” Brothers’ and sisters’ fond and buoyant spirits; a father’s wise protecting affection, a mother whose perennial fount of exquisite tenderness, no faults, no follies of ours can exhaust!

Then the first wild triumphs of vanity, and the exquisite illusions of love! So much for youth—is it not too richly blest, too lavishly apportioned? While over all this fairy land, hope sheds a light which bathes the present in a roseate tint and the future in a sunny mist.

And middle age is not all desolate, though harsh expe-

rience snatches the lamp from hope, and we know that confidence is an idle word, and that to be and to seem are not all one; that to aim is not to succeed, that to please is a moment's triumph, and to be forsaken and forgotten an eternal regret; that to love is to be miserable, to be loved a dream, to trust is to be betrayed, and to believe is to be deceived: all this is bitter, but still middle life has its objects and its comforts. The partner of life, not the angel he seemed, but the partner still,—with many faults, has some redeeming virtues. Children spring up, and bring, with much misery and fear, much atoning love. Our own earthly prospect was dark and bounded—for them, we look again into the blue distance, and espy the Alpine heights of success and of fame. That fireside of the heart, a mother's love, remains to us still, and middle life is not all desolate, although its cold realities are "too real."

But now the desolation comes; now the mother is gone to the silent grave—the partner of life has preceded us there, or drags on the isolated existence of egotistical and impassive old age, or, sunk in second childhood, has outlived all but his wretched body and its miserable wants. Brothers and sisters have died away, or live in distant spheres; the body grows feeble (for the battle of life brings down the strongest at last); children have perished, or are carried away by a jostling crowd, and are grown ambitious or indifferent, or at any rate "this world is too much with them,"—they are not what they were to us—we are not all the world to them. Health, beauty, powers, confidence in others, confidence in ourselves, the power to please and to win, to be pleased and to be won—all, all are gone. Worn, feeble, ill, hopeless, forlorn, memory laden with regret, if not remorse—the hour of desolation is indeed come—the inevitable solitude of age supplies the sweet companionship of youth. Weary of seeking those who shun us, we totter to some lonely spot—we sit down alone on the cold, flinty shores of time, and watch the dark waters of eternity.

* There, as even we watch alone, but not companionless, "light springs up out of darkness, and joyful gladness for those that are true of heart."

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

A light rises in the east: look forth, aged pilgrim, from those cold, flinty shores of time; look across the dark waves of eternity.

Search, search thy troubled memory, not for the false joys of youth, not for the mean cares and vile ambitions of middle age, but for the once-slighted prayer of thy childhood, learned, alas! by rote—but for the faith professed but little practised. Hail, old age! no longer desolate and decrepit! a flood of light shall bathe thy soul, a fount of peace and comfort fill thy heart! Believe and hope! Take thy long-neglected Bible; then, old age, sit at the foot of the Cross; and there, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," await that sleep from which thou shalt awake in thy Saviour's bosom.

Hail, then, divine Religion! all-atoning comforter of the soul! We began by grudging youth and middle age their undue share of happiness and joy; and contemplation has gently led us to this result, that the very solitude and desolation of age, if it indeed lead the pilgrim to the foot of the Cross, is worth ten thousand-fold all the delicious illusions of youth, all the best realities of manhood.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PARASITE.

THE Hon. Colonel Pevensey returned from the grand ball (which had been given, in reality, in honour of Jeannetta Orde), extremely discontented with that lovely mystery, and rather out of conceit even with his magnificent self.

But he was infinitely more in love than he would have been, had a haughty and condescending offer of his hand been accepted, with blushing and passionate delight. *C'est la nature des hommes!*

Colonel Pevensey until this evening had had some trouble in persuading himself to accept Jeannetta; now

he was resolved to lose no time or trouble in persuading Jeannetta to accept him.

"It must be to pique and annoy me," he thought, "that she flirts so openly with that confoundedly handsome Frenchman; for though Symons thinks him a little in my style, and he might have a fair chance, had he the field to himself, of course she'll despise and cut him directly she discovers that I'm in earnest. No wonder she should doubt it; I can hardly believe it myself. How astonished the world will be! To have refused a beautiful young countess in her own right—to have slighted the acknowledged beauty of the court, the exquisite Miss Vernon—to have declined the hand of the millionaire, Miss Todd (plebeian soul!) and countless other aspirants, high-born, beautiful, and wealthy, and then to make a match which (respectable enough in itself, for the girl *is* beautiful and well-born) seems almost a *mésalliance* for Colonel Pevensey! Well, I'm in love with her; there's the solution of the enigma—in love with her, or something very like; and love, which "lays the shepherd's crook beside the sceptre," shall do a greater wonder still, in making me woo and win this stately nobody! I like her pride; it will put her above all mean jealousies of my little darlings, and a step-mother's petty spite. I am sure she is of a generous nature. I can read the elevation of her soul in her noble brow, and a kind woman's heart in her beautiful eyes and her most roseate and inexplicable smile. Come in!" he said, rather impatiently, as a low knock at the door disturbed his self-complacent reverie.

It was the colonel's former aide-de-camp, the wily Symons.

"I beg your pardon, colonel, but I heard you walking up and down the room, and feeling very wakeful, I thought I'd just look in to beg you for a Havannah (mine are out), and know how you liked the ball."

"I never care much about a ball," said the colonel, haughtily; "one must be in love, or on the look-out, or something of that kind, to make a ball a matter of any importance!"

"Oh, colonel, I did not imagine that you were likely to enjoy this ball (brilliant as it really was) like a girl in

her teens—or a poor devil like me, on the look-out for some tolerable lass, with a portion, who may take a fancy, if not to me, at least to my uniform. I only meant, I hope you were not unusually bored; I hope the women did not quite overwhelm you—I know they generally do!”

There was a little malice in this, well-concealed under a mask of *naïveté*. Symons had noticed Jeannetta's pointed indifference to, and avoidance of, the august colonel, and her all-absorbing delight in the count's devoted attentions.

With the deep grudge and keen spite which parasites always cherish in their hearts for those they toady and flatter, Symons had revelled in his proud patron's mortification and disappointment.

“Oh, don't talk to me of the women, Symons—I'm weary of them—I went to the ball in a confoundedly ill humour, and I came away in a worse—I'm bored even at the palace balls, and at Almack's, so you may fancy what I must have been, when the Countess of Manvers was queen of the night.”

“Yes, it must have been intolerable to you, of course, colonel; but I'm sorry I was so mistaken; I thought you seemed in such good spirits, and I'm sure you made little Rosalie Orde very vain, and all the other women very jealous, by letting her talk to you, and sit by you, as you did.”

“Miss Rosalie Orde,” said the colonel, with emphasis—for it jarred on his proudly sensitive ear, to hear a Symons speak thus freely of the sister of the woman he meant to marry—“Miss Rosalie Orde was one of the very few women present with any claims on my attentions: I found her a very amusing, lively, and agreeable person.”

“Has she cut the beauty out, colonel? Has she put that small and perfect aquiline a little out of joint?”

The colonel, by a cold stare, implied his disgust of Symons's vulgar familiarity—then seeing him colour up, and look abashed, he said condescendingly:—

“No, my dear Symons, no! I admire that splendid brunette more than ever—but I can't make her out: it seems to me, she's half in love with that foreign detrimental.”

"All a *ruse*, colonel, a woman's *ruse* to bring you on, and from which I judge that she's over head and ears in love with you, and cannot let matters take their course, but is (excuse me) a little impatient of your aristocratic apathy and patrician reserve—wants to pique you into jealousy and a proposal."

"Do you really think so, my dear fellow?" said the colonel, unbending. "Symons, help yourself and me to a glass of maraschino. Thank you. See if you can find a few cakes or biscuits. No, don't ring; I've sent my fellow to bed! Look on the consoles, and in the chiffonier—that's right—now give me another bumper. It's very fine liqueur this; a present from my aunt, Lady Barbara! Trust a woman, particularly a spinster of quality, for giving you a good glass of maraschino. Symons, fill your glass—here's to Jeannetta Orde!"

"Here's to Jeannetta Pevensey! Colonel, forgive me, may I take that liberty? I believe it'll be for your happiness, colonel; or upon my soul Sam Symons is not the man to drink the toast!" And tears of plausibility filled Symons's eyes as he wrung the colonel's hand.

"I believe you, Symons; thank you, my good fellow—thank you for a thousand proofs of zeal and of devotion. The Honourable Mrs. Pevensey! and may she be a good wife to me, and, better still, a good mother to my angel children!"

"The Honourable Colonel and Mrs. Pevensey, and sweet Miss Clarissa and noble little Marmaduke," said Symons, as the colonel filled his glass again. "Colonel, that beautiful Miss Orde, proud and reserved as she seems, is very romantic and impassioned: perhaps, as you mean to marry her, I ought to be careful what I say, but I must tell you too. Every night, wrapped in a dark cloak and veil, I see her glide past your windows, watch them as a devotee watches the shrine of a saint, and then hurry away, casting many a longing, lingering look behind."

"Impossible!" said the colonel, actually blushing, while tears of emotion filled his fine eyes. "She cannot be so rash, sweet girl! to what does she not expose herself!—what love, what devotion!"

"I dare say she's there now," said Symons.

"Heaven forbid!" replied the colonel. "If I thought so, I would go to her, and propose to her at once, and beg her for my sake never again to venture out alone at night." He walked to the window and looked out, much agitated, much excited. Symons followed.

"Oh, it would so wound her to be detected, by you especially! Look, colonel, look!"

The colonel looked forth, and though the night was dark, he discerned a slender female form, robed in black, moving in the distance, and turning and stopping in her wild and hurried retreat to gaze again and again at the windows of his house.

"She is gone!" said Symons. "Do not follow her to-night; to-morrow you can put a stop to this dangerous evidence of devoted love. Of course when engaged to you, your slightest wish will be her law. Good night, dear colonel; what a good thing it must be to be a Pevensey, with your face, fortune, and figure, instead of being a Symons with mine. To be sure, if the pleasure of love is the wooing, we poor devils beat you hollow, for we woo and woo in vain for ever and ever, and you have no wooing to do; the women do it all for you! Ha, ha, ha! good night, colonel."

"Good night, Symons; I can depend on your discretion? Your attachment I well know I can rely upon. Try to forget what you have seen; I should be sorry, when you are in the presence of Mrs. Pevensey, that you should remember this romantic but rash devotion of Jeannetta Orde's."

"Never fear, colonel; the lady you distinguish by giving her your name, will seem to me too exalted for me to remember anything but that I am her servant, her slave!"

So saying, Symons bowed himself out of the room, and when he had reached his own, and not till then, he sat down and indulged in the hissing, venomous little laugh with which toadies regale themselves at the expense of their patron-dukes!

"Bravo! capital! pompous and conceited fop! Now will he propose to Jeannetta, whom I could worship *d'avance* for the cold and scornful rejection with which she will meet his condescending proposals; nothing less

would have brought the apathetic coxcomb to the point! It will not do to let him discover, though, that it is that exquisite Violet who so madly worships this incarnation of pride! I'll write her an anonymous line that shall sting her into resigning these nightly visits to the shrine of her dangerous idol! Well might he be proud of such a conquest as that. The world is full of Jeannettas, it contains but one Violet; and that Violet shall not be trampled on by you, cold aristocrat, if I can place it on my bosom and wear it in my heart of hearts! Oh, the pleasure of playing off so haughty a puppet as Pevensey. And now to bed, to dream of Violet!"

For some little time after Symons had left him, Colonel Pevensey stood watching the clouds hurrying over the moon's fair face, and then he opened the drawer of the chiffonier, and took out two beautiful boxes of French puzzles, and two exquisite little Geneva watches, chains, and seals.

"I told them I would atone to them for going to the ball instead of having a juvenile party on my Clarissa's birthday."

He put the watches and toys in a basket, and stole up-stairs.

He passed through a large, airy, day-nursery, the walls of which were stuck all over with prints of Cock Robin, and the tragedy of his death; Red Riding Hood, and her tale of woe; the Babes in the Wood, and all the delightful and touching fictions of babyhood: a noble rocking-horse, a swing, a baby-house, toys in abundance of every kind, revealed the retreat of the happy children of a wealthy, a fond, an indulgent parent.

In the sleeping nursery was a large bed, in which an upper and an under nurse snored aloud, and opening out of it were two little dressing-rooms, each containing a beautiful little couch shaded with white and rose-coloured muslin curtains; and on the snowy pillow of one, lay the perfect profile of Clarissa, while her golden hair waved over its undulations, and on the other, was seen the head of one of the noblest and handsomest boys father ever boasted. The children formed a striking and beautiful contrast: little Clarissa's features were

perfectly Grecian, except that the forehead was loftier and more prominent than we see them in the Venus, and this, by causing a slight indentation between the brows, gave an individuality to the countenance, and took from it the stony cast of the perfect antique. The complexion was fair, with the transparent fairness of a shell, and the cheek tinted like its centre; and on that cheek the eyelashes of golden brown fell from snowy lids, which concealed large hazel eyes full of love and soul; the hair, abundant, naturally waving, and of the aristocratic gold of Ossian, had been carefully gathered by the nurse under a little scarlet silk net, but much of it had escaped the pretty bondage, and floated over the snowy pillow. A little cambric night-dress, *à la grecque*, delicately frilled, left part of the rounded, waxen chest exposed; and the scarlet cords and tassels of the silken net mixed with some of the golden tresses, and formed a glowing harmony of colour worthy of Titian's pencil.

The beautiful little rosy mouth, half open, murmured, "Dear, dear papa!" and in the small patrician hand was a sprig of heath Colonel Pevensey had given her from his breast, where it had been placed by one of his hopeless admirers—the forward and sparkling Miss Fitzwilliam.

Who could marvel that even the proud colonel's eyes moistened as he looked on so much loveliness and love! Long did he gaze on that sweet sleeping child, and then he gently placed the watch in its pretty morocco case, and the bright box of French toys on a little table by her side; and those who looked upon Colonel Pevensey as the coldest and haughtiest of aristocrats, "the man without a tear," would have marvelled to see him bend meekly down at the foot of that little snow-white bed, and while soft tears filled his eyes, and soft emotions swelled his heart, humbly pray his God to protect, his Saviour to redeem, and the Holy Spirit to sanctify that motherless girl, imploring all to guide him for her happiness rather than his own in the step he meditated, and to keep her ever pure and happy as she lay before him there!

He then stole gently to the bedside of his boy. Even at that early age the attitude was bold, and the outline

masculine, compared to the soft grace of little Clarissa ; the complexion was rich and warm ; the cheek, though sunburnt, was of a clear and glowing red. His nose already showed a slight inclination to the patrician curve we call aquiline ; from the high brow rose rich and spiral curls of brightest chestnut, which clustered in thick short rings round a throat whose beautiful white showed a curious contrast to the sunburnt face. He had thrown almost all covering from him in the impatience of boyhood, and the father marvelled at the strength and development of the limbs, which united the graceful and the powerful, in a manner seldom seen except among the patrician race in England.

An emotion more proud but less tender than that he felt for his little girl, swelled the father's bosom, as he placed his gifts by his boy's side, and breathed a prayer for him, less likely to be heard on high, because this world, its hopes, its schemes, and its mean ambitions, had more to do with it.

"He is a true Pevensy," thought the father ; "nothing of his mother, but those long dark lashes, and that small, rosy mouth. Am I not blessed indeed, with such a boy as that, to transmit my time-honoured name, and bear all its honours, even if I should not live to wear them ! With Marmaduke to glory in, and Clarissa to love, what is a wife to me, except, as Symons says, to sit by my side in a carriage, or at the head of my table ?—to talk and sing to me when I'm cheerful, and to be silent when I'm vexed ?—to tell Marmaduke tales of chivalry, and romp with the wild boy, and to sing sweet ballads to Clarissa, and dress her doll, and teach her all soft feminine accomplishments, as no hireling ever can ? Yes ! I think we do want such a person here—and I think these darlings, if not myself, will find a comfort in Jeannetta !"

Poor Jeannetta ! could she have heard the soliloquy, would the colonel's offer have swelled her breast with pride ? But if woman ever knew half the remote and indirect causes of the homage she receives, and the compliments she delights in, would she go forth so "flown—ith insolence," and so inflated with conceit ?

He proud Jeannetta, to talk or to be silent, according

to a haughty master's merry or captious mood!—to tell tales to his boy, and dress dolls for his girl!—to romp or to teach—both a drudgery, the one active, the other passive!—art thou to be wooed and wedded, for such objects as these? What then?

Are not the loveliest and most gifted women, with all their passionate devotion and lofty aspirations, their captivating accomplishments, and their mental powers, too often wedded to those who, whatever they may pretend, while they seek to win them, have no object, when won, but that of making them glittering toys, or household drudges, resistless victims of ill-temper, discontent, *ennui*—creatures always to be scolded, slighted, and found fault with, with impunity—taken from an admiring circle, and a cherishing family, from parents who dote on, and brothers and sisters who love, not merely “to suckle fools, and chronicle small beer,” but to be rated the while, as menials who can give warning are never rated, slighted, disparaged,—the ill-requited, unthanked playthings, housekeepers, nurses, alias wives?

Woman and her master, indeed! Who does not rejoice when, as in the case of Colonel Pevensy, the haughty proposal meets with a haughtier refusal—and he who is so ready to humble her he pretends to seek to honour, is, at the very outset, humbled to very dust himself? Had Colonel Pevensy, who, in spite of his inordinate pride, *hauteur*, and conceit, had some generous and noble feelings, some depth of affection, and some elevation of soul,—had he wished to marry Jeannetta, because he felt that home is not home, without a woman's gentle presence—that there is a void in every manly bosom, a wife only can fill—had he wished to woo her, in order to give to one so dignified and deserving all the advantages of his position, and all the enjoyments of his wealth—to associate her with his children, that they might emulate her graces and her virtues, and learn from her to please and to win—had he towards Jeannetta, or any other woman he meant to marry, felt any such regard and respect, or entertained any such intentions as those, we should have wished him the reward of all honourable suits, a prompt and flattering acceptance. But as it is, even with a little partiality for the haughty colonel,

we are not sorry to see him humbled ; and we are glad he should learn that he may sue in vain, and that there is a woman who can say him " nay !"

During the first day or two of Lady Beauchamp's visit, Mrs. Orde, good-humoured and confiding, quite secure of De Crèveccœur's devotion to herself, and proud of exhibiting her influence over him, promoted, and, indeed, playfully commanded him, to pay a great deal of attention to her wily sister-in-law.

"The captain, dearest, will do anything to oblige me, or any friend of mine," she would say ; "let him escort you, dear Eleanor ! make any use you can of him."

"The day is ours *before* wedlock," she thought to herself ; "though for every week of power before marriage, we often pay with years of slavery after. Poor Crèveccœur ! it is putting his devotion to a very severe test ; for Eleanor speaks wretched French, and looks quite a wreck. But it will put her into a good humour, to have that fine, handsome captain to escort her, and I will repay him by an extra smile or two. I wonder what they will talk about to beguile the way ; the weather, and the hour, and the tide, I dare say."

Not so, not so ; at least not long did the weather and the hour and the tide engross two interested and ambitious schemers.

Lady Beauchamp, rather admiring the captain as a man, and adoring him as a Cræsus, soon led the conversation into the channel in which she wished it to flow. She was not quite so wretched a French scholar as she had led Mrs. Orde to believe, and she soon contrived to convey, amid professions of affection and admiration for her *belle-sœur*, several falsehoods and one important fact : the falsehoods were, that Mrs. Orde was a good deal her senior, that the dear *naïve* creature was by birth quite a rustic, that she was a good deal made up both in face and figure, and that though she seemed so smiling and frank she was of a very jealous and artful temper—all this the captain heard, but did not heed ; but what he both heard and heeded was the one fact, that her fortune depended on widowhood, and that a second marriage would leave her with scarcely a subsistence !

"Men are so different," said Lady Beauchamp : "my

poor brother married her for love, and always seemed so fond of her! and yet, he has cruelly compelled her either to remain single—a sad fate for a sensitive woman, captain—or to be an incumbrance on the man who loves her well enough to marry her. Now Sir George Beauchamp was a stern, jealous, harsh man, grudged me even my pin-money during his life, and used to say he would compel me to be a widow or a beggar; I expected nothing less, and so I found he left me uncontrolled mistress of a thousand a-year, and no proviso about widowhood at all!”

Now this was perfectly true, except in the exaggerated amount of her ladyship's jointure.

The captain's heart beat quick as he listened.

“However,” she added, “they were perhaps both justified in the judgment they formed of their wives. Mrs. Orde is very well-disposed—poor, dear, loving creature—to marry any man whose income would justify her in sacrificing her own; and indeed she has been, ever since her first year of widowhood, keenly on the look-out. I have often quite wept over her disappointments. Orde, of course, foresaw all this, while my poor George was aware that though I had no will of my own when I married him, taken from school and my doll (scarcely knowing what a man was, or what marriage meant) to to preside at his table;—he, I say, knew full well that before I was twenty I had become so strong in mind, and so refined in taste, that there was not that man in all the circles of fashion who could have *won* that hand he had obtained without the trouble of *winning* it; and has it not proved so? The offers I, or my poor jointure, have had, would fill a thick book, and here I am, Lady Beauchamp still; while, if I mistake not, my sister has at length won the love she so well deserves, and I may congratulate myself on a new brother-in-law. Dear Rosa! I am so glad she has a chance of a second husband at last; ‘the desire accomplished is so sweet to the soul.’”

“And who,” said the captain, with apparent unconcern—“who is the happy man to be blest with the plump hand of the merriest and kindest little widow in the world?”

"Surely, Captain Crèvecoeur, you are joking when *you* ask such a question?"

"Joking! not at all; you mean to say that Mrs. Orde meditates a second marriage."

"Yes."

"And with whom?"

"With whom? why, with you!" laughed Lady Beauchamp, while the captain affected to look first puzzled, then amazed, then angry, and finally burst out into a scouting laugh, in which Lady Beauchamp joined.

"My dear Lady Beauchamp," at length he said, taking her thin hand, and gently pressing it, "I am eternally your debtor—sans m'en douter, j'étais sur le bord d'un précipice. For that man," he added, with laudable enthusiasm, "is indeed on the edge of a precipice, whose thoughtless attentions raise any hopes in the breast of a charming woman, which he has not the least idea or intention of realizing. Mrs. Orde is a kind, good creature, but not at all my style, much too merry, loquacious, and (forgive me) too much *embonpoint*; the sad, the fragile, and the pensive beauty, has ever been my *beau-idéal*! And who," he added, rising in enthusiasm, "with such a taste, could look at Mrs. Orde, when her enchanting sister-in-law was by her side? I have been to blame, much, very much to blame; j'adore le sexe! but oh, that my thoughtless folly should cost one amiable woman a sigh!"

And he, by some internal process, concocted and produced a tear, while his fat form heaved and puffed like a pair of bellows.

"It is done," he said; "it is a lesson, a bitter one, but not learnt in vain. If you are right, if you are not mistaking general urbanity and universal encouragement for particular affection for me—I fly the Marine Parade—I fly from Brighton—from Albion—oh that I could add, from myself—"

As all these *flights* did not at all suit Lady Beauchamp, she smilingly and gently said—

"Fly not yet!" but be advised by me. Preserve with my sister-in-law your accustomed manner through this evening; watch her well, study her looks, weigh her words; and if you cannot detect in all the peculiarities

of a lady who considers herself all but *fiancée*, never trust a woman's tact and judgment again."

"Kind and warning angel!" cried Crèvecoeur, with well-acted rapture, "sent just in time. Alas, to what, in my passionate heart, may not gratitude and admiration lead!"

"To nothing but friendship!" sighed Lady Beauchamp.

"What man so placed can answer for himself? Friendship," he added, "between man and woman, in their prime, c'est l'amour sans ailes!" Alas, that love is so seldom mutual! The unloved love us, and unloved we love. Is it not so, most amiable of friends?"

"Not always," replied the elderly husband-hunter. "But do not detain my hand, captain; we are in sight of the bay-windows of my sister's drawing-room. They would have a good laugh at me, indeed, if I, who have always kept all your treacherous race at such a distance, were to make such a signal exception in your favour. See, there is my sister, she perceives you—look how she welcomes you with her fat white hand."

Lady Beauchamp, on entering the drawing-room, perceived at a glance that something very important had occurred.

Mrs. Orde looked excited, pleased, rather unusually consequential, and somewhat mysterious withal. Jeannetta's marble cheek was slightly flushed; Rosalie looked pale and uncomfortable; and Miss Macpherson was sitting on a distant sofa, full dressed, even to powder, a triumphant colour on her wrinkled cheek, and a huge fan, representing shepherdesses with high head-dresses, and waists like inverted extinguishers, watching their sheep with half-closed eyes, and keeping at bay, with their crooks, those born foes of helpless innocence, wolves and men!

After a little half-playful, half-jealous raillery from Mrs. Orde to the captain about the length of his absence, he took his leave; and then Lady Beauchamp inquired so earnestly what had happened, that Mrs. Orde, who was in reality as eager to tell as her sister was to hear, with many a coy delay and extorted promise of inviolable secrecy, announced the astounding fact that the Hon. Colonel Pevensey had proposed to Jeannetta; and the

still more amazing intelligence that Jeannetta had at once and positively rejected him.

Lady Beauchamp turned pale with envy at such a tribute to her niece's charms; but consoled herself with the recollection that, after all, that niece, by her idiotic preference of a foreigner, had lost all chance of an English coronet, which, had she accepted Colonel Pevensey, would, at the demise of his invalid brother, have been certainly hers; and as it was an older and far more honourable title than the Countess of Tunbridge, Lady Beauchamp would have had the mortification of seeing her daughter eclipsed by her niece.

When Jeannetta had left the room, to array herself for an expected visit from the count, Lady Beauchamp begged so earnestly to be told the particulars of this extraordinary event, that Rosalie playfully complied in the following words:—

"You must know, then, dear aunt, that soon after you went out, the colonel's man came with a note, to say that his master intended himself the honour of calling in the course of an hour; and as his visit had reference to business of importance, he hoped to find the ladies at home.

"Jeannetta, who had intended riding at that time with Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon, was very angry when mamma insisted on her receiving this visit.

"At the appointed hour, punctual to a moment, the colonel's loud, imperious knock shook the house, and a few roses on to Jeannetta's white cheek, a few lilies to mine,—mamma's knitting needles (busy with a long purse for the captain), and a sprinkling of powder with which Miss Jenny had adorned her *tête* on the august occasion of this formal proposal for her niece's hand, and triumphant conquest and defeat of so formidable a member of the abhorred race of man.

"He came in, looking very stately, rather pale, but, I must own, more handsome and more princely than any one I ever saw.

"Still his air was not that of a suitor imploring a favour, but of a sultan conferring one. Jeannetta did not yield in dignity and reserve to her lordly lover. You may be sure, aunt, King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba might have exchanged just such glances and such

greetings as they did. Mamma was, as she always is, kind and cordial. I was friendly, because I almost hoped he might prevail, and save me the misery of seeing Jeannetta the wife of a foreigner and a Papist. But the gem of the piece was aunt Jenny. She drew near the colonel, and so pointedly received him with the curtsey she had been taught to make when presented to Queen Charlotte at her coronation, that the colonel was obliged to respond with a minuet bow; and then she drew near, fixed herself in state in an arm-chair, plied her fan, and began evidently to await his opening of the subject.

"Too proud, and too full of his own ineffable superiority to be put out of countenance by anything, the colonel said—

"Some gentlemen, Miss Orde, might feel rather abashed by such a formal family conclave sitting, as it were, in judgment upon him; but what I have made up my mind to do I care not who may witness; and what I shall not delay to proclaim to the world I am not ashamed to reveal to this amiable circle."

"And what may that be, I beg to know, colonel?" said Miss Jenny, with a pomp surpassing his own, and bridling so that a small cloud of powder rose out of her *toupé*—fanning herself the while with a vehemence that sent it over the immaculate and superfine undress coat of the colonel's uniform.

"Drawing himself up to his full height, half shutting his fine eyes, and twirling his auburn moustache between his taper and pearl-white finger and thumb (thereby revealing a half-scornful, half-saucy curl of his chiselled lip), he said—

"What that may be, madam, I believe this lady (your great-niece, if I mistake not) is as able to inform you as I am—at least, if her modesty has allowed her to appreciate at their full meaning the attentions I have had the pleasure of paying her, she has not over-rated them, if—"

"My great-niece, Miss Jeannetta Orde, sir," said Miss Jenny (rushing in with more warmth than politeness), "is not likely to over-rate any man's attentions: she is too much used to be wooed, sir, to, as the immortal Milton says, 'unsought be won!'"

“‘For that reason, madam, as it is my object to woo—and forgive me if I add to win—I am here to confirm, by a formal proposal, what, I think, my attentions to Miss Orde must have led her to expect.’

“‘Speak for yourself, child!’ said Miss Jenny, scarlet with wounded pride and maiden wrath. ‘The suitors of these days are so unlike what they were in my young time—they think so much of themselves, and so little of the ladies they address—they make so sure of success, and seem so much mair as if they were doing honour than seeking it, that I ken na’ how to deal wi’ sic wooers. It’s the colonel’s intention, he tells ye, lassie, to win and to win you. I fancy he’ll find it easier to do the first than the last, or ye’re na true descendant o’ the house o’ Macpherson, and na true grond-niece o’ mine. Speak till him, Jeannetta, yoursel’—I’ve dune!’

“‘And not before it was high time, madam,’ said the colonel, rising, and reddening with wrath. ‘Your age, your sex, and your relationship to Miss Orde, have alone induced me to tolerate your unjustifiable interference in a matter entirely between Miss Orde and me, and your most extraordinary attack upon myself.’

“‘My age, sir (rude as it is in a gentleman and an officer to allude to it in my presence), gives me experience, and entitles me to reverence; my sex raises me far above you and all monkind, and indeed, from its pure and lofty eminence, I look with scorn on all the grosser race of mon; my relationship to Miss Orde makes me jealous of her honour and her dignity as of my ain. And so now, sir, that you’ve roused the auld Macpherson bluid in my veins, I’ll tell you that those wha woo the dochters o’ the house of Macpherson woo wi’ bended knee, and dooncast e’en, and trembling voice, impressed wi’ the leddies’ beauties and merits, and na’ fu’ of their ain conceits, a’ the attentions they can offer, overpaid by the privilege of offering them—na’ insolently hinting at hopes and expectations they’ve excited, but humbly confessing those they have presumed (in silence and secrecy) almaist to venture to entertain—to such suit alane did leddies listen in my time, and of my hoose, and sic alane did min dare to prefer at the feet of the maidens of the house o’ Macpherson. And were I, sir, so unfor-

tunate as *not* to be of the sex with which you have *dared* to reproach me, it's not with words only I'd answer your haughty airs to my great-niece, and your rude attock upon mysel'—we'd measure then, colonel, swords instead of wits; and I might come off conqueror then, as I flatter mysel' I do noo!

"As you most certainly do, dear madam!" said the colonel, thinking it best to conciliate the eccentric oddity and virulent old man-hater, who evidently had so much power and influence in the house, and who seemed to hold in her withered hands, like a second Atropos, the threads of his destiny, as far as matrimony was concerned.

"It will not do," thought the haughty colonel, 'to be rejected by these absurd nobodies; to propose at all is weak and demeaning enough, but to propose and be rejected would be a positive disgrace, and make me the jest of all the clubs in St. James's. And yet so full of punctilio is this old Scotch spinster, that perhaps she will induce her saucy niece to forego the pride of accepting, for the greater glory of refusing, Colonel Pevensy!'

"Miss Macpherson," he said, 'times are, I own, changed for the worse, very much for the worse, since gentlemen came on the same sweet errand to you that I do to your lovely niece; the manner and the garb are changed, dear madam, and most decidedly, I own, for the worse: but the heart is the same, and true love, madam, is the only thing that beat the same in Adam's breast as it does in that of the humblest of his sons.'

"I ken na," said Miss Macpherson, 'what Adam has to do wi' it, Colonel Pevensy? I have always conseedered that Eve mad' hersel' a warld too cheap, wi' a' her advantages, parsonal and intellectual; and when we remember, too, she was the only woman in the warld, and might have had it a' her ain way, to be sae promptly won by a creature wi' very sma' intellectual development, in my opinion—a being without energy to be either very gude or vary bad, wha felt na thirst for knowledge like our hapless but enterprising mither, or if he did and had, "let I dare na, wait upon I would," and without courage to be first, was weakly imitative eno' to follow in doing wrang. A vary pompous, time-serving, cooardly, imitative, conceited fellow I have always conseedered Adam—

very fit to till the ground and tend the cottle, but vary unfit to rule a creature sae far his superior as was our mither Eve. Na! na! to my thinking Adam was but a sorry coof after a', and Eve had but a puir bargain wi' him, or I'm much mistaken. Indeed, it's my opeenion, colonel, that the curse was laid sae heavily on her becasse she alane had fortitude and courage to bear it. I believe wi' you, sir, that Adam and his true luvie *are* the type of a' his sons and a' their selfish passions; and if Eve had but been true to hersel', and chosen a single life, not ainly she'd have been a worshipped queen instead o' a wretched droodge, jist made to suckle fules and chronicle sma' beer, but there'd have been na need of the first deluge, nor to my thinking of a second, to poonish the pride, vanity, and wickedness of a' the sons o' men.'

"'Well, madam,' said the colonel, 'your views on these matters are far more original than orthodox. However, I cannot waste, in pleading Adam's cause, the time I wish to devote to urging my own suit. Be sure, Miss Macpherson, that though bended knees, swords, solitaires, and sacques, are out of fashion, true love neither is, nor ever will be so; and the reverence and affection with which I now offer my hand and heart to Miss Orde, are as deep as if I did it with all the ceremonious punctilio of the last century. Miss Orde, to you let me appeal. If I have ever found any favour in those beautiful eyes, and if that kindest and noblest of hearts has ever felt any interest in my passion and my destiny, let those sweet lips pronounce the 'Yes!' that is to make me happy.'

"'Now then, Jeannetta, speak for yoursel', and forget na' yer a woman o' speerit and my grond-niece.'

"'Colonel Pevensy!' said Jeannetta, gently but very firmly, while a beautiful colour spread over her snow-drop cheek, and a little emotion lighted her black eyes, 'you have been, I believe, from your earliest youth the spoiled child of the world and its women, and great allowances should always be made for that unfortunate, blinded, and, forgive me, egotistical being—a spoilt child! It is, therefore, without any resentment that I assure you, that the attentions you think so much of are in my opinion anything but flattering; in all of them, forgive me, self-

love seems to me to predominate; you seem actually as if you fancied that you condescended, in noticing a lady whom you yet mean to make the arbitress of your fate; you appear as if you thought you conferred an honour, where (forgive me) every courteous and chivalrous gentleman feels that he is imploring one. This may do, sir (as I believe it does), in the world of fashion, where *hautour*, *nonchalance*, and conceit, win that favour women should only accord to merit, to true tenderness, and to delicate and self-forgetful devotion; but I am not one of that false, vain, and hollow clique you call 'the world!' The slight notice—for to my thinking it is nothing else—which you have *deigned* to take of me and mine, has often amused but never affected me; and in all respects, were I asked to describe the man I should glory, not to raise to the throne of my own heart, but to hurl from the pinnacle of conceit in his own—not to take an honest pride in accepting, but an equal honest delight in rejecting—that man would be the one whose disdainful attentions, and haughty conviction that his slightest smile is an honour, his merest wish a law, and his haughtiest intimation a welcome suit—in short, Colonel Pevensey!

"'You cannot be in earnest, my dear Miss Orde,' said Colonel Pevensey, with a forced smile; but he was very angry—so angry, indeed, that he grew very pale, and his lip quivered with emotion.

"'Why not?' asked Jeannetta, calmly.

"'Exactly!' said Miss Jenny Macpherson. 'What for na'?—Why suld na' a woman be mair in earnest in refusing than in accepting you, colonel!'

"'There is no reason why she should not, in most cases, my dear madam, but I hope there are some in this, why she should. Do not trifle, my dear Miss Orde, with the affections you have won—tell me how to suit my words and manners to your taste—give me hope that time may enable me to make myself more acceptable, and to ripen the little preference you may ever have felt for me into a lasting affection. Do not suffer you kind aunt's dignified but rather antiquated notions, to make you exact what the age does not produce—a Sir Charles Grandison; and above all, do not, by a refusal so positive as to destroy hope, let pride put an eternal barrier

between our happiness, and—forgive me if I say it—our inclinations.’

“‘Did ever mortal woman hear the like?’ said Miss Macpherson.

“‘Colonel!’ said Jeannetta, ‘you are under some strange delusion, for which you have to thank yourself, not me. However much you may have been flattered by others, however much you may have flattered yourself, I have never condescended to flatter you. You were never more to me than any other slight acquaintance, nor have your attentions (much as you seem to think of them) been greater than those most gentlemen pay to the ladies at whose houses they visit. But had they been of the most earnest and devoted nature, the result would have been exactly the same—there is no fear of wounding the pride, or hurting the feelings of one so popular and so idolized as Colonel Pevensey, when I say I am rustic enough not even to admire him. One so well known to be to the taste of all the beauties of the court, cannot be much distressed at learning that he is not to mine. I wish at once and for ever to extinguish hope, and to put the eternal barrier you allude to, not between inclinations which, on my side, do not exist, but between ourselves and any allusion to this subject.’

“‘There spake my ain Jeannetta,’ said Miss Macpherson triumphantly.

“‘Oh, Jeannetta,’ said Mrs. Orde, who had not spoken before, but had been apparently busy with a purse she had only inextricably entangled, ‘take some little time to consider of the honour Colonel Pevensey has done you.’

“‘Sister,’ said Rosalie, ‘before you refuse one so every way suited to you, let me implore you to give Colonel Pevensey an opportunity of proving that he is attached you.’

“‘Thank you, dear Mrs. Orde—thank you, sweet Miss Rosalie,’ said the colonel, not only much humbled by Jeannetta’s refusal, but really very anxious not to appear, at his age and with his pretensions, in the character of the rejected suitor of a country girl. ‘Do persuade my haughty and lovely tyrant to give me an opportunity of proving how deep and how sincere is the love, that can thus humble at her feet the last of the Pevenseys’

“ ‘The more deep and the more sincere that affection, Colonel Pevensey,’ said Jeannetta kindly, ‘the more does it entitle you to candour and consideration; whether under other circumstances you could have conquered my natural prejudice against fashionable men of your caste and clique, I cannot say. It is possible perhaps that a noble heart and a powerful mind may be disguised under the repelling disdain, affectation, and *nonchalance* which seem to bespeak a weak head and a narrow heart; but to me, individually, even such a discovery would be unimportant, for you cannot win what I have not to lose. My hand is all but promised, and my heart is entirely and fervently devoted to another.’

“ ‘I’m grieved to hear you say that of my mon,’ said Miss Macpherson; ‘a preference for a single life is the best excuse any woman can mak’ for declining an offer of marriage.’

“ Rosalie wept and said, ‘Oh sister, is it indeed so certain! Is there no hope?’

“ Mrs. Orde remarked that it was a rule with her not to seek to influence the conduct of her daughters in such matters, but that were her wishes of any weight in the scale, they were all on Colonel Pevensey’s side.

“The colonel rose, cold, sarcastic, and stately, very pale, and his eyes flashing. He bowed proudly all round to the party, and said, ‘Good morning, ladies; I shall not apologize for an intrusion which Miss Orde’s conduct (as she well knows) so fully justified; to a true lady there is but little triumph in rejecting one she has led to propose. All I request is, that whenever Miss Orde tells the astounding and incredible tale of Colonel Pevensey’s proposal, she will relate also the unusual, furtive, and (forgive me) imprudent proofs of affection which brought him to her feet. I have the honour to wish you good morning, ladies.’

“ ‘What can he mean, Jeannetta?’ said Rosalie.

“ ‘Have you ever encouraged him, my darling?’ said Mrs. Orde.

“ ‘Mane!’ cried Miss Macpherson; ‘he manes (the conceited, inflated fop!) that he construes every look into adoration, and every smile at his vanity into encouragement and admiration.’

"‘I care not what he means,’ said Jeannetta; ‘my own conscience acquits me of one iota of coquetry, or one jot of vanity in my very slight intercourse with him. My whole thoughts and feelings are so devotedly and entirely Gonzalve’s, that I really have been often scarcely aware of this ineffable coxcomb’s disdainful attentions.’

"‘Well, there’s no use in regretting it,’ said Mrs. Orde, drying her eyes; ‘it’s done, and it can’t be undone.’

"‘It is a thousand pities,’ said Rosalie. ‘How noble, I must say, how beautiful he looked!’

"‘There’s never any reason to regret refusing a man. It’s when woman is weak eno’ to accept him she’s cause for regret; and as for being a thousand pities, Rosalie, it would have been a pity the conceited creature suld na’ ha’e had the gude lesson my ain Jeannetta has taught him the day; but it is surely na pity that he suld learn himsel’ and teach his fellow fops that British leddies are not to be treated like Eastern slaves; and that the very king of coxcombs can be humbled to the dust by a country girl, when some o’ the auld Macpherson bluid flows in her veins!’ ”

Such was the curious account of an honour which filled Lady Beauchamp’s heart with spite and envy; and a conviction (judging of Jeannetta by herself) that some very pointed and even inexcusable encouragement had brought the proud colonel to her niece’s feet. But to her mind this circumstance rather increased the triumph of the rejection. She did not envy her the distinction of this proposal, more then she did the skilful daring and successful tact and tactics which she believed had secured her the triumph of rejecting him.

But Colonel Pevensey, with his fortune, his advantages, and his wealth (to say nothing of his position and popularity), would have been so much greater a match in her opinion than even the count, that her envious heart was almost reconciled to her niece’s marriage with the one, so much more would she have considered her daughters and herself eclipsed by her union with the other.

She won Jeannetta’s heart by praising her, with well-acted enthusiasm, for her noble and disinterested devo-

tion to her admirable count; and warmly embracing her, advised her, in order that she might break no more hearts, to accept the count at once, and fix the day.

Jeannetta buried her beautiful and blushing face in the hollow bosom of her wily and treacherous counsellor; told her she had been compelled by her mother to promise not positively to engage herself till she had spent a few weeks in London; and passionately begged her aunt to use her influence with her mother to accelerate their departure from Brighton, and to commence and curtail their London campaign. This Lady Beauchamp promised to do; and retired to her dressing-room, to try the aid of all "the cosmetic powers," and all the arts of the toilette, to enable her to eclipse her sister-in-law, and complete her conquest of Captain Crèvecoeur.

She had almost resolved, urged by the sight of a lank purse and an empty pocket-book, a dishonoured cheque, and several long, bluish-looking, wafered epistles, to carry the affair by a *coup de main*, and to elope from Brighton with the captain, or to be privately married to him there, if she could reside in the parish long enough for the purpose.

She was resolved on one course or the other—which ever the captain himself seemed most to approve of.

If her own charms were somewhat faded, she took care that her toilette should be of the freshest and brightest; if her eyes did not sparkle, she had gems that did, with a lustre dearer to Crèvecoeur than that of the brightest eyes in the world; there was only *just* (as Phœbe said) her face that was a little faded, and a little the worse for wear.

Everything else was a tasteful mixture of velvet, satin, blonde, lace, embroidery, and cashmere. She certainly did look handsomer (thus attired) in the eyes of an interested foreign fortune-hunter, than Mrs. Orde, who, conscious of a still blooming face and plump figure, had made little toilette for a quiet dinner at home, and in a dark blue silk dress up to her ears (in the unbecoming fashion of the day), and in a Pamela cap, appeared quite a dowdy beside her full-dressed sister-in-law.

The three foreigners were invited to dine with the Ordes. Jeannetta (like her aunt) being anxious to please

the fastidious taste of Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon, had dressed herself with the anxious care with which a woman dresses to please a lover who takes a pride and interest in her toilette, and whose heart adores her the more, the more she dazzles his eyes and bewilders his brain. Her hair, so carefully braided, was wreathed with white jasmine and scarlet geranium—her arms and neck were bare, and set off by lace and pearls; while a dress of Indian muslin, flounced with needlework to the waist, and that waist confined by a broad geranium sash, and a scarf of the same colour flung around her, showed her to as much advantage as her loving heart could wish.

Rosalie, on the contrary, despising the baron, and not unwilling that he should know it, had hastily donned a very unbecoming *barège*, of the odious colour called *vapeur*, so trying to all, and so disfiguring to a *blonde*! This dress almost touched the tips of her pretty ears; and her golden hair, which was so becoming and beautiful, in its natural ringlets, was brushed straight across her forehead, *à la Grisi*, in a manner most detrimental to her charms.

Miss Jenny, however, kept Lady Beauchamp and Jeannetta in countenance; she was still in the full dress costume she had adopted to preside at Colonel Pevensey's proposal, and the excitement and triumph she felt in his defeat, still lent a flush to her cheek, a juvenile elasticity to her step, and a youthful animation to her discourse.

Montfaucon, whose watch, like that of all true lovers, always gained, was very early by Jeannetta's side in Mrs. Orde's drawing-room; but the baron and the captain kept the dinner waiting a most unreasonable time, and when they did appear they looked so pale, and were so *distract*, that Mrs. Orde blamed herself for having teased the captain with a little half-playful jealousy, and attributed the baron's uneasiness to Rosalie's cruelty.

Rosalie herself, more shrewd, and perhaps more suspicious, fancied there was some far deeper cause, than one which she did not believe would have really affected them at all. She saw, to her great joy, that her aunt was fast becoming the object of the captain's serious attentions, and having taken care to let the baron know that Miss Jenny had six hundred a-year of her own—she

judged him harshly enough, to believe that the obsequious homage he was paying her, was a preliminary to a transfer of his devotion, from a maiden of eighteen to one of seventy.

Rosalie felt a sort of inexplicable conviction that something of great and mysterious importance, perhaps an affair of *honour*, or to her thinking, *dishonour*, had detained them; and her cheek grew pale, and her conviction was confirmed, as she remarked a stain of blood on the crumb-cloth, where some water had been spilled, just where the captain stood, and which, taking the shape of the sole of his foot, gave reason to believe that he had been recently treading where the blood had been shed. When she remarked it, the captain's face grew livid, and the baron started and trembled; and then De Crèveœur owned that a *rencontre* *had* taken place between himself and a gentleman, who, in a coffee-house, had spoken slightly of some ladies whom (he added, significantly) he loved and revered above all others on earth; that they had met on the Downs—the baron being his second—that a flesh-wound, painful, but not dangerous, had brought the vile traducer of innocence to reason and repentance; and that, having bled profusely, he, the captain, who had hastened to bind up his antagonist's wound, had probably soiled his boot on the blood-stained turf, which blood had soon been dried by the sun, and would not have left any marks on the cloth, but for the wet, which had moistened the sole of the boot.

Both Mrs. Orde and Lady Beauchamp, each, individually, believing her own name to have been that which the captain had perilled his life to defend, and her own innocence to be that for the traducing of which he had so punished the traducer, burst into tears at this tale of chivalrous and heroic devotion.

Rosalie felt, as she looked at the stain, a shuddering horror and sinking of the heart, for which she could not account, and even the captain, generally such a *gourmand*, and the baron, so celebrated a *gastronome*, though they drank more than usual, could not muster appetite for any of the dainties Mrs. Orde had provided.

Unable to dissipate the gloom that seemed to settle on all the party, save the count and Jeannetta, Mrs. Orde

proposed that the party should adjourn to the theatre, as Violet was to appear again in the character she so admirably personated, the exquisite Juliet of Shakspeare; and until coffee was ready, and it was time to dress, a walk on the pier was proposed.

"Does any one know how our poor old landlord is to-day?" asked Mrs. Orde. "I have not heard his heavy step on the stairs, returning, as usual, from cheapening a few shrimps for his miserly supper. . Rosalie, he is your especial *protégé* and pet—have you seen him to-day? He has not brought me down the receipt for the rent I paid him yesterday. When we come in, send Phoebe up to him to inquire how he is, and ask for the receipt."

"Oh, I will go myself, after our walk," said Rosalie. "He hates to see any one else; he has told me so; he thinks everybody else wants to rob him. I told you how, last time, he, thinking the door was bolted, actually said, 'Come in' to me, before he had locked up an old desk under his pillow, in which were bags of gold, and bundles of notes."

"You do not say so!" said Captain Crèvecoeur. "What! is it possible that beggarly-looking, half-starved old fellow has any hoards?"

"Oh, impossible! you must be joking, Miss Rosalie," said the baron.

"I thought I told you all of my adventure," said Rosalie.

"*Moi pas!*" said the captain.

"*Ni moi!*" said the baron.

"Oh, I am sure you were present in person, though perhaps absent in mind," said Rosalie, laughing. "The fact is, Grimshaw is a regular old miser—just such a one as one reads of in the 'Eccentric Biography,' a Daniel Dancer, or an old Elwes; he has one room at the top of this house, the windows are barred, and the door plated with iron; it has two strong bolts, and a huge lock; two crazy chairs, a small deal table, a wretched flock bed, an old bureau, and an iron chest; this, with a small basket grate, in which he burns a little coke in cold weather, forms all his furniture. I think his memory fails him at times, for when I knocked, he said, 'Come in,' thinking

he had locked the door ; owing to this mistake, I came upon him just as he was huddling away, under his wretched pillow, a desk, filled as I have described ; he told me a long story about the money being a friend's, and that he was counting it over before giving it up, which he was to do that very evening."

"Perhaps that was true," said the captain.

"He seemed very low and dejected," added Rosalie.

"Perhaps at having to give up the stewardship of the money," said the baron.

"I did not believe his story myself," replied Rosalie, but of course I appeared to do so ; and seeing this, he offered me one of his ricketty old chairs, while I paid our rent. He then entered into many details about his poverty, the difficulty he had in making this house answer, and in providing for himself. He told me he felt very ill and low ; that in his youth, he had not been a very good or dutiful son ; and, therefore, he feared his days would not be long on the earth. He said his father had died mysteriously, and as they had lived on bad terms, and had had words, an enemy had tried to cast suspicion on him, but in vain ; he was acquitted by the coroner's verdict, 'Died by the visitation of God.' But three things disturbed him now ; he had either dreamt he saw, or actually seen, his father's ghost. To dream of his father always foreboded evil to him ; once at sea, after dreaming of his father, the vessel was wrecked, and he was drowned, though restored to life again. Added to this, it was Friday, and he had seen the new moon through the window-pane ; he was certain something dreadful would happen to him, and he wished he was dead."

"Just the sort of old fellow to destroy himself," said the captain.

"Quite a hypochondriac," said the baron.

"Well," said Rosalie, "I tried all I could to comfort him ; and as he really looked very ill, and we were going to tea, I stepped down, and took him up a basin of hot tea, with a little brandy in it, with a muffin and sally-lunn, toasted and buttered, for I really believe he had scarcely broken his fast. Oh, how he devoured the food, and with what eagerness he drank the tea ! I should have been to see him to-day, only he told me he should

be out all the morning ; but when we come in, I shall run up and see him, and take him some coffee and toast."

"You will be his heiress at this rate, Rosalie," said Mrs. Orde.

"Heiress of his threadbare old spencer, his crazy chairs, flock bed, and basket grate," said the captain. "I believe he is very poor, and that the money Miss Rosalie saw, was, as he said, a trust, which he had to give up, and the parting with which made him so unhappy. Ladies, shall we walk?"

All set forth, except the Baron de Saint Felix, who expressed a wish to keep Miss Jenny company, and to complete his delightful task of holding an immense skein of cotton, which she was winding into a ball, to knit garters.

When they were alone the Baron de Saint Felix exchanged his air of playful gallantry for one of tender sorrow—fixed his soft, blue eyes, moistened with one of the large tears he had *à volonté*, on the face of the stern old spinster, and heaved a deep sigh.

"What! do ye weary already of being useful, baron?" said Miss Jenny—"if so, gang yer ways, and join the gay party—I'm quite independent of help or company, baron, and am never less alane, than when alane!"

"Alone!" said the baron, who began to speak broken English pretty fluently. "It is sweet to be alone, but den it must be alone wid what we love."

"Alane, quite alane with yoursel', I suppose you mean, baron; for no man really loves anything but his ain sel'."

The baron looked puzzled; Miss Jenny's Scotch was too much for him; not being able to get on very well with words, he tried the universal language, pantomime.

He put his hand on his heart, and uttered a loud "Oh!"

"What ails ye, baron?" said Miss Jenny; "are ye bod in yer inside? Eh, sir, but you luke unco pale; the cholera's in Brighton—I'll send for the doctor—spake, what ails ye?"

"No, no—not cholera; worse, oh worse!"

"Worse than cholera!" cried Miss Jenny; "spake, man, spake. It must be the plague then."

"De plague, yes, lady, de plague of all noble hearts, lady," and he seized Miss Jenny's hand, and dropped on one knee. "I love!"

"Weel, baron," said Miss Jenny, "I pity ye, but I canna' help ye, and wuld na' if I could. My niece Rosalie tak's after me: she scorns monkind, and prefers a seengle life. I'm sorry for ye, as ye seem less conceited and mair rasonable than maist o' yer inflated, treacherous, pompous sex, but Rosalie—"

"Talk not to me of she," said the baron; "she is noting to me. I lub, I adore, I worship—"

"Whom?" said Miss Jenny.

"You, lady, you! divine, adorable Jenny!" and he threw himself at her feet, and caught both her hands.

But Miss Jenny, all the blood of the Macphersons rushing to her brow, and all the pride of her immaculate and ancient sisterhood firing her eyes, rose to a height naturally above that of woman, and much increased by a pair of very high heels; she armed herself with her huge fan, stamped with her quaint-embroidered feet, and tossed her powdered head till a little cloud environed her stern and angry face; she cried in a shrill voice—

"How dare ye ottempt, ye saucy callant, to play aff yer monkey tricks on a dochter o' the hoose of Macpherson! Ye've chosen ill, ye conceited popinjay and bauld upstart, in seeking to mak' fun o' me! Jenny Macpherson, wha spurned a' serious attentions at seventeen, is na' seventy to be mad' the object o' yer ridicule, ye vile Southron! ye play-actor! ye kestrel!"

"You tink me make fun, and so you scold a poor fond boy; but you pity me when I swear it is no joke; I am earnest, I love you—oh, Jenny!"

"Jenny, indeed! hop o' my thumb! Unloose my skirt! by the bluid o' my fathers, I feel inclined to fell ye wi' my fan! What ha'e seen in me, puppet, to mak' ye presume to act siccan a pantomime as this?"

"I have seen beauty; I feel lub and despair. You tink I joke—as I am a Frenchman and a baron I am earnest."

"I despise you for yer rude unmannerly jest, fellow," said Miss Jenny; "but I should loathe you, did I believe you were in earnest."

"I am—you shall be mine—you shall fly wid me—if not—"

"Well, if not?"

"Den despair! but no, no, you will say yes—you will fly to-night. Do not frown; chuse, if you say again *no*, I will blow out my brain."

As he spoke, he took a pistol from his pocket, and held it to his ear.

"Fire, fire," said Miss Jenny scornfully; "there is no fear of your blowing out your brains, for I believe you have none to blow out. But listen, if you are in earnest: if this is not an impertinent piece of buffoonery and a saucy attempt at making me a butt, it is worse still—the miserable speculation of a foreign fortune-hunter, who, foiled by the niece of seventeen, wishes to ensure himself six hundred a-year by making a fool of the great-aunt of seventy. If you are driven to this baseness by want, I will supply you."

"I am in no want, angel!" said the baron, taking handfuls of gold and bank-notes from his pocket; "or rather I want nothing but pity and sympathy."

"You want either a straight waistcoat or a horsewhip, boy!" said Miss Jenny.

"Nay, then," said Saint Felix, "to de proof, proud Jenny! You can brave de death of me—now if you will not fly dis moment in dat chaise to London, and be mine, brave death yourself!" as he spoke he cocked his pistol, and presented it to the withered ear of Miss Jenny.

"Fool," said Miss Jenny, firm as a rock; "think you a Macpherson fears to die? Fire if ye dare, and then the laws will rid the world of a fool or a knave!"

"No, no, I cannot harm you," said the baron, putting up his pistol. "Forgive me—let us be friend if nothing more!"

"No, sir," said Miss Jenny, "I sit in the same room with you na mair: if this was a trick, it is an impertinence that deserves the horsewhip—had I only a male relative to admeenester the chastisement you sae weel deserve. If it was an earnest and interested wish, to wed yer five-and-twenty years of idle, wicked folly, to my seventy winters of wisdom and discretion, and that from a mean desire after my puir little fortune, seeking

to mak' the savings of mony generations of high-born but thrifty Scotch lairds supply the lavish and boyish extravagances of a Southron dandy, and a French adventurer—then are you unworthy to sit in the presence of ony but the meanest and most dishonest of hucksters, and of all of them you will be the maist degraded, for the barter you wish to effect is the meanest. Now ye have heard my last word, mak' what excuse you can; but gang yer ways, as either a saucy whipster baulked of his impudent laugh at wrinkles and grey hairs, or as a paltry, mean-spirited little huckster, who would barter his little paltry Tom-Thumb-of-a-person for the auld Scotch spinster's puir sax hoondred a-year! Gang yer ways! and instead o' laughing at my folly, as ye seem to have expectit, fret like a whipped bairn over yer ain, and tear your flaxen, doll-like curls, and bite yer pretty whiskered lips for vary shame and spite at yer detection and defeat. Gang!" cried the angry old lady, seeing he did not move, "gang, or it'll be the waur for ye, or for ony ither popin-jay wha daurs to treeble wi' the last dochter o' the hoose o' Macpherson, when the bluid o' her ancestors boils in her veins, and the speerit o' her forefathers stirs in her bosom!"

So excited and so belligerent were the air and countenance of the irate and gigantic old spinster as she rose from her seat, that the little baron feared for his beauty, if not for his life, and hastily darted from the room.

Miss Jenny, with the air and the feelings of a conqueror, sat down breathless and flushed, fanning herself violently. Before she had recovered her composure the whole party returned from the Chain-pier. To every inquiry after the baron, Miss Jenny Macpherson replied with evasive but mysterious significance, a haughty toss of the head, and an angry flash of her still keen grey eye.

Tea and coffee came, but the Baron de Saint Felix came not, and the captain began to appear uneasy at his absence, and seemed to associate it in some degree with the late affair on the Downs.

Rosalie, true to her amiable promise to the wretched old miser, and, as usual, president of the tea and coffee table, called for a tray, on which she placed a basin of hot coffee and a plate of toast, adding, at her mother's

suggestion, a poached egg and some broiled ham ; Phœbe attended her, to carry the tray up-stairs, but Rosalie would not offend the poor old recluse by letting any one but herself enter his apartment. Having sent Phœbe for some salt, which had been forgotten, she placed the tray on an old chest on the landing, and knocked at the door, gently at first, but receiving no answer, louder and louder. As this was still in vain, Rosalie tried the door—to her surprise it was not fastened ; she opened it gently, the room was dark, for an old black garment of the miser's was fastened to the iron bars of the window ; a rich flood of the light of the setting sun poured in at the open door and fell full on the curtainless bed, where lay what one glance of horror unspeakable informed Rosalie was the lifeless and murdered body of the old man ! From a gaping wound in his throat the blood had welled profusely, and the hand that had done the deed would seem to have been his own ; for an old clasp-knife, newly sharpened, was in his blood-stained fingers. Rosalie, when the conviction of what had occurred rushed upon her mind, as the sun illumined the ghastly picture, uttered a loud and piercing shriek, that was heard in the drawing-room, and sank perfectly insensible on the floor by the bedside, where a pool of blood was formed by a stream that trickled from the wretched bed.

The party at tea below, alarmed by the shrill scream of ineffable horror which Rosalie had uttered, rushed up-stairs. The captain seemed unwilling to be of the party, declaring himself of a constitution unequal to enduring sudden shocks, and that if, as he feared, the old man had died of some fit, and was lying dead in his bed, he had rather not see the corpse, because he always was subject to faint at the sight of death since he had found his beloved grandfather and grandmother dead in their arm-chairs.

Lady Beauchamp and Mrs. Orde, however, would hear of no excuse ; Jeannetta and the count had already rushed up-stairs, and the two ladies compelled the unwilling captain to escort them.

His excuse, however, proved to be no pretence, for at the first glimpse he caught of the poor old man, so lean and careworn, his grey hairs clotted with blood, and the

knife clasped in his almost skeleton hand, he turned sick and faint, and but for the Count de Montfaucon would, like Rosalie, have sunk on the floor.

The count supported him to the landing, and opened the window, and then he returned to assist the ladies in removing Rosalie.

"It is evident," he said, "that the unhappy old man has died by his own hand; but of course a coroner's inquest will sit upon the body; and in the meantime we must send for a surgeon, and leave everything just as it is. Come, ladies, this is no scene for you; I will go for a medical man myself, if you will return to your own apartments, and try to quiet your nerves, and compose your minds."

But Jeannetta clung to the count, and would not let him leave her. All women who love, fancy there is, in scenes of peril or of horror, no protection, no safety, but in the presence of the beloved; and so Captain Crève-cœur was sent for the doctor, and the count remained with the ladies.

The doctor arrived promptly; but the captain did not accompany him. He sent word by the servant who had attended him, that his nerves required some hours' quiet, in the open air, after the shock he had received.

The doctor pronounced that life had been for some hours extinct. He declined saying any more until a coroner's inquest had sat upon the body; but there was a something mysterious and suspicious in his manner, which filled our party with alarm. Rosalie had recovered from her swoon, but was still very unwell from the shock she had received. The Baron de Saint Felix did not re-appear; and the captain did not return till late, when he joined the rest of the family, whom a shivering sense of horror had determined to sit up together all night in the drawing-room. While Mrs. Orde watched and tended Rosalie on a distant sofa, the captain and Lady Beauchamp conversed together in the embrasure of the window, a good deal concealed by its drapery; and Jeannetta and her intended sat enthroned in a nook of their own—her beautiful head on her lover's shoulder, his arm round her waist, whispering all those impassioned, egotistical, and tautological extravagancies,

which form, in reality, the boasted, over-rated eloquence of love.

Even the horrible event of the day, though it had shocked and terrified them, could not engross them long. The sight of blood and death, reminding Jeannetta how sudden may be the doom of what we love, how easy it is to die, and yet how horrid and how ghastly is a violent death, made her cling with more passionate tenderness to her Gonzalve; she drew his hand to her heart, as though to keep him with her, by the knowledge that its every throb was his, and the intensity of her devotion lent a new and entralling power to her beauty, which increased the count's passion almost to idolatry.

It was evident to all but the absorbed Jeannetta that some great cause of anger and annoyance had arisen between the count and the captain, and that it was the count who considered himself the aggrieved and injured party. He treated Crèvecoeur with the most sovereign contempt, and even rudeness, and looked at him with an expression of angry scorn; while the ladies were surprised to see so brave an officer, as they believed the captain to be, tolerate this so patiently!

The captain, on the other hand, seemed anxious to conciliate the count, and tried, on several occasions, to enter into conversation with him, but in vain. This state of affairs between their beaux added to the general discomfort of the party; and Mrs. Orde determined, as soon as the inquest had been held on the wretched Grimshaw, to quit Brighton for London. While the hours are moving on leaden wings for all but the lovers, we will leave them for a little while to inquire how the haughty Colonel Pevensey endures the mortification he has undergone, and what are his feelings in his new, and to him most extraordinary, situation, as a rejected suitor.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DISCOVERY.

THE Honourable Colonel Pevensey, however much he might draw himself up, and however haughty and contemptuous he might look as he quitted the scene of his

di grace and his defeat, felt very much like a conquered monarch, and was lowered in his own esteem, to a degree astonishing even to himself! For the first time in his life, he began to examine his real claims to that universal admiration (nay, adoration) of womankind, which it had been his fortune to excite; and a very unpleasant-suspicion that his age had something to do with his present astounding failure, made him consider, for the first time, that he, like all men past five-and-thirty, might be considered middle-aged by a girl yet in her teens; and must ere long be acknowledged such by all the world, and, worse still, by himself! The ill-humour in which he had left the Ordes' house, was not at all diminished by this discovery, and the impossibility of concealing Jeannetta's mortifying refusal from his toady Symons, added to his rage and discomfiture.

Had he been very sincerely or deeply in love, he would probably have determined not so easily to resign the object of his affections: a man who really loves can hardly be persuaded not to hope; but the admiration and preference Jeannetta had awakened had been so much the result of the imaginary passion for him which Symons had induced Colonel Pevensey to attribute to her—the idea of her secret idolatry, and rash but romantic devotion, had heightened her every charm in his proud heart. Now that he discovered she did not even admire him, he began to suspect she had wilfully deceived for the glory of rejecting him. A positive dislike to the first woman who had ever mortified his pride sprang up in his vain heart—a dislike which a very little would have ripened into positive hatred.

Symons, who was pretty well aware how the haughty colonel's offer would be made to, and how it would be received by, the proud Jeannetta, was not inclined to encounter the rejected suitor, in the first hours of his anger and his mortification; and it was a great relief to Colonel Pevensey to find a note from him, announcing the sudden illness of a brother, and begging him to excuse his setting off to see him at once.

The sight of his lovely children watching for him, to thank him with fond words and warm caresses for his beautiful gifts, succeeded better than anything else could

have done in soothing his wounded pride and irritated temper (his heart had in reality little to do in the affair). As he threw himself on a couch, Clarissa timidly brought a stool to his side, and fondly kissed his hand, and Marmaduke boldly sprang upon the sofa, and threw his arms round his father's neck.

Clarissa's soft eyes were full of tears of filial tenderness and gratitude, as she took her pretty little watch out of her fair young bosom, and held it up to her father, that he might see how beautiful it looked, and how well it kept time.

The boy, on the contrary, full of noisy joy, began, "Now, papa, do you want to know exactly what o'clock it is? I can always tell you to a minute—your old watch, papa, cannot be half so good as mine. Mine is better finished than Clarissa's, though hers is smartest outside. Symons says he thinks mine has rather the best works, and Wilson says it goes on diamonds, and Clarissa's only on rubies. It is very well for a girl to have jewels outside; but a boy, you know, papa, does not wear a watch as an ornament, he wants one that never loses or gains a moment—a girl's time is of no value, but a boy's, you know, papa—"

"Oh, but Marmaduke!" said the sweet little girl, "I do want to know exactly what o'clock it is; for if my time was of no value, I always want to know when it is exactly nine o'clock, that I may go into my own darling papa's dressing-room; and when it is one, and he will come and play with us before our dinner; and when it is eight, and he will come and see us in bed; and now I can always know without teasing nurse or Mary; so you see, dear Marmaduke, I do want my watch to go well, as much as you do."

"Oh, no! that is all nonsense, isn't it, papa? But it does matter, when Mr. Lamotte comes to teach me to ride, that he should not keep me a minute waiting, and that Wilson should bring my pony to the door exactly at twelve; and that my tutor should come at nine, so that I may have done at twelve."

"Oh," said the girl, in her humbler and less selfish nature, "it is important, Marmy, that you should be ready for Mr. Lamotte, and still more for Mr. Darwin,

and not keep them waiting; but your waiting a little is not of so much consequence."

"Yes, but it is, of a great deal more, for I am a gentleman, and my papa is the Honourable Colonel Pevensy, and my uncle is Lord Chester, and papa will be a nobleman some day, and so shall I; and Mr. Lamotte is only a riding-master, and Mr. Darwin a tutor, and they are paid for coming, and they ought to come to a moment, and they shall, now I've got a watch!"

"Ah, but, Marmy, sometimes Mr. Lamotte is late because he cannot leave his poor little sick boy—and then Mr. Darwin has such a naughty pupil before he comes to you, he wants a little rest and breakfast, and if he is a little late you must not seem to notice it. Think how hard he works, to keep his poor old mother like a lady. One day he was late because she would not take any breakfast unless he breakfasted with her, and she is so very old."

"Ah! I forgot all that. Well, I won't be too strict with Mr. Lamotte, because of the little cripple, nor with Mr. Darwin, because of his poor old mother; but I'll take care, now I've got this beautiful watch, always to be ready myself, and not to lose any time."

"Except in looking at your watch," laughed Clarissa; "but you are a dear, good Marmy, for minding what I say. Isn't he, darling papa?"

"Yes," said the papa, who had listened with deep though hidden interest to the conversation. "Marmaduke is a noble boy, for determining to make such good use of his watch, and you are a dear, good girl, for advising him so wisely and so well; and now, kiss me, my angels, and tell me what o'clock it is, for I think it is time for you to take your evening walk."

Luckily both watches tallied to a moment, and as it was the very hour for the walk, Colonel Pevensy, with many a fond embrace, dismissed his darlings, and after they were gone he said to himself:—

"Perhaps that saucy nobody might have proved a very step-mother to those treasures! I have made a fool of myself, certainly, and I deserve the ridicule I shall have brought upon myself; but one real tear from Clarissa, or one reproach from Marmaduke, if their new mamma

made them less happy than now, would affect me more than all the *persiflage* of all the titled coquettes at Almack's, and all the jests, puns, and quibbles of all the wits about town. I am sure she is a vixen—how her colour rose, and how her eyes flashed!—fancy my setting a vixen step-mother over my gentle, fond, meek-spirited Clarissa, and my proud, noble-hearted, but petulant boy!

“Artful too she must be, most artful, thus to have led me on! Perhaps, after all, she wants me to propose again, in a manner more suited to her absurd pride and the ridiculous, old-fashioned pomposity of her absurd old man-hater of a great-aunt; but I’ve had a narrow escape, or, rather, my darlings have, I believe, and I’ll never peril their happiness again. They suffice to make my home sweet to me, and in a few years (nine or ten) Clarissa will be able to do the honours of my house, as none but a Pevensey-born could do them; and Marma-duce will be a companion and a friend for me by that time; and, as he evidently inherits the pride and spirit of his ancestors, so, I hope, will he equal them in intellect and in elegance of manners. The worst of it is Symons’ knowing it—it is a great relief his being away for a day or two—and now I’ll to the theatre, for that clever and pretty little Violante Woodhurst makes an exquisite Juliet, and seems to play to me, as the patron of the whole theatrical establishment, I presume. I wish I knew that girl’s history: there is something so thorough-bred and so refined in her beauty, her voice, and her manners, that I cannot believe her to be the obscure adventuress her position here would proclaim her. Yet I think Symons told me something about her having a brother or a cousin a private in the regiment!—wonderful if she *is* so meanly connected—for she’s one of nature’s gentlewomen—and, if I’m not much mistaken, she is a really good girl, though she is an actress, and a lady by birth, though a vagabond by profession!”

Never had Violet so bewitchingly realized that Psyche of the drama—the adoring, the adored, and adorable Juliet of Shakspeare, as she did this evening. The house was full. The commonest people appreciate a really fine and true delineation of nature, even in its most poetical form; and the delicate, blue-eyed sylph (long

before the autocrats of the drama and the princes and nobles of the land had proclaimed her unrivalled) was popular among the townspeople and working-classes of Brighton, and looked upon with that sort of admiring tenderness which the roughest natures sometimes entertain for the brightest and softest among womankind. It was strange to see that, however any other attraction might thin the dress circle and the private boxes, Violet's charms and talents alone always filled the pit and the galleries.

On the evening in question, a public ball drew away many of our young heroine's admirers, among the nobility, the military, and the gentry. It was not, therefore, the consciousness of a fashionable and overflowing house of grandees that gave such a light and spirit to her performance. Her humble patrons attributed her evident inspiration and beautiful energy to gratitude for their support, and they applauded her (men, and women too) with the warmth and zeal of their unrestrained and enthusiastic class. . But to Colonel Pevensy, seated in his private box, shrouded from public view by a curtain, but perfectly apparent to Violet, it was evident (or at least it would have been evident, before his severe lesson of the morning) that it was *his* presence that called forth all the young actress's best powers; it was to *his* admiring and noble countenance her own inspired and enchanting face was turned; it was his gentle and dignified applause (conveyed by the softest patting of his white kid gloves, not the uproarious praise of the many) that made her cheek glow, her bosom heave, and her whole frame tremble with gratified emotion.

Many were the flowers and bouquets flung at the feet of Violet, when her noisy patrons compelled her to appear before the curtain, and she did so, led by the pleased and triumphant manager.

The liveried attendants gathered these tributes up for her in baskets—all but one which had fallen at her feet, and which she herself picked up, with a curtsy to the house, but with a timid glance at Colonel Pevensy's box, raised it to her lips, and placed it in her bosom. This was a sprig of myrtle the colonel had worn, and which, being the only tribute of the kind he had about

him, he, in the enthusiasm of the moment, flung at poor Violet's feet.

How little, as he threw it in half-playful admiration of one he looked upon almost as a gifted child, how little did he deem what a source of dangerous and passionate delight that tribute would be to that enthusiastic and gifted girl! What kisses, what tears would be lavished upon it—how it would be planted, tended, watched—how protracted were the hopes that it would take root—how inadmissible the conviction that it must die—how superstitious the despair brought by the certainty that it was dying—dead!—and how much like a devotee's worship of a sainted relic was Violet's impassioned treasuring up of its withered stalk and shrivelled leaves!

"I should think that poor and beautiful child silly enough to have fallen in love with me," thought Pevensy, as he drew his cloak around him, and returned home, with folded arms and thoughtful brow. "But Jeannetta Orde and the old spinster man-hater have taught me a distrust in such matters, new to my vanity, and humbling to my pride. If I am too old to be loved by the stately, full-grown Jeannetta, I must be antiquated indeed, in the eyes of that sweet child, who seems yet in her earliest teens. That handsome young soldier in the pit, whose soul was in his eyes as he gazed upon her, and who was taken ill, and carried out, at the close of the performance, is much more likely to be the object of the passion that evidently animates her performance, than the haughty, middle-aged aristocrat, whom she may wish to conciliate as a patron and a critic, but can never dream of loving as a man! I must inquire about that young fellow. If the girl loves him, it is a thousand pities his fortunes should be so far beneath his own appearance and her deserts!"

Thus musing, the colonel returned to his own house, and paid his customary visit to the chambers of his sleeping darlings; and as he gazed upon the happy smiles so habitual to them, that even in sleep their sweet faces wore them still, he consoled himself again for the deep wound Jeannetta had inflicted on his vanity and self-love, by a conviction that a step-mother (with the spirit and resolution she had betrayed) would

probably have robbed these young hearts of half their happy confidence and careless glee—have either felt herself or infused into their spirits the poison of jealousy—have clouded their bright dawn of life, and perhaps, had she gained much on his affections herself, or brought him children who did, have deprived them of that entire and exclusive fondness, the loss or diminution of which now would break his Clarissa's loving heart, and embitter his boy's noble spirit.

With these reflections Colonel Pevensey consoled himself, as he paced up and down his drawing-room, and looked out upon the moonlit sea, and the clear azure of the sky.

There is something very soothing to the spirit, and very softening to the heart, in a moonlight scene, and particularly when that silvery and spiritualized light is mirrored and extended by a large expanse of water. What touching memories of the past, what soft and yet thrilling emotions in the present, and what wild and inspiring anticipations for the future fill the heart and mind of any susceptible being, who looks out from "chambered loneliness" on the moonlit sea! In those silver masses of light, and those sudden depths of shadow, how much of poetic mystery, unknown to garish day, appears to lurk! The moon is not much associated with our childhood; for, in earliest life, happy slumbers shut us out from her sweet but melancholy influence: it is in the first delicious dawn of youth (and it may be of passion) that we first learn to love the moon—"sun of the sleepless"—and oh! how much dearer than the sweetest sleep is the first vigil of the awakened heart; when, alone with the moon, and the first delicious memories of passion, the young votary of love and sorrow counts his rosary by that silver lamp—a rosary whose beads are those gems of young affection, the timid, stealthy glance, the tear, the trembling touch, the first shy, hurried kiss, the impassioned vow, the ardent word, the fervent prayer! How those old days of wild enchantment come back upon our hearts, as through tearful eyes we watch that self-same moon, the moon who lighted us to the cold shrine of the false idol, who smiled on our wild hopes and passionate vigils there, and who lights us still to the ruined shrine

and uprooted image of clay, smiling on our disappointment—it may be on our despair! And how is a moonlit watch crowded, thronged, not only with the memories of disappointed love—and all love is disappointed, disappointed if crossed, more disappointed if successful—but all the ghosts of the past visit us with “the glimpses of the moon!” The early friends, the companions of school, or of sport—once all the world to us! and now changed, or dead, or far away, or such cold, commonplace acquaintance they are nothing to our hearts! And the dear, dear parents! who so loved us, and whom now, perhaps, we love as the lost and the unforgotten alone are loved—and all who sympathized with us in our early aspirations, all we ever loved and cherished—come back with the moon more loved and more regretted. All we ever hated or wronged come back, and we repent us (how vainly now!) of that hate and of that wrong. Armies of the dead seem to live again in one long moonlight vigil. Dead love, dead friendships, dead affections, dead hopes—regret, repentance, remorse, and despair—all live again in their minutest details as we study the pages of the past “by the soft, sepulchral light of the silver lamp of night!”

And while Colonel Pevensey stood at the open window, and all the pale spectres of the old time moved in sad procession in the moonbeams before him, and old affections, and old hopes, and old disappointments filled his eyes with tears, and his heart with soft emotions, a slight but dark figure, suddenly emerging from a deep shadow, and moving rapidly across the quiet light, drew him from the melancholy, tranquil past, and sent the colour to his brow, the flash to his eye, and the throb to his heart! For he looked upon the same slight, graceful figure Symons had pointed out to him the night before; and the colonel felt convinced, in spite of her haughty rejection of the morning, and all the bitterness of her scorn, and the mortification she had taught him, that the shrouded female, watching his windows at that late hour, as a devotee watches at the shrine of a saint, was no other than the imperious, cold, and queen-like rejecter of his offers—Jeannetta Orde!

This time there were no scruples, and no Symons to

detain him, and revenge and resentment had more to do than love with the haste with which he seized his cap and cloak, and hurried out into the moonlight.

For some time he hurried so stealthily along in the shadow of the tall houses, forming the Marine Parade, that the lady seemed unaware of his approach, and repeatedly turned in the moonlight to watch his house, and even rested occasionally against the railing that fronted the sea.

But no sooner did he appear in the moonlight, evidently in pursuit of her, than she sped like a frightened fawn away, away—and with a fleetness that compelled Colonel Pevensey to exert himself in a manner very unusual with him, to keep her in sight at all. The lady continued to fly, and the colonel to follow, gaining but little upon her, until they came where the houses were thinner, and at greater intervals, and at last into the open country; and here the colonel was almost determining, in humanity to the terrified and wearied girl, to give up the chase, when she suddenly struck her foot against a stone, and fell prostrate in the road.

Of this accident the colonel availed himself, and as, though she contrived to raise and seat herself on a grass bank by the roadside, it was evident she was too much hurt to run, or even walk, the colonel was soon by her side.

Her bonnet, veil, dress, and mantle, were all black—and as he drew near, she turned away, and hid her face in her hands.

“I hope you are not seriously hurt, sweetest and dearest one!” said the colonel, gently attempting to take her hand, seating himself beside her, and trying to draw her towards him. “Look at me, my love! Come, you owe me some atonement for the anguish you have caused me. Is it such a pleasure to sport with your own feelings and mine, dearest? and are you so rash as to risk my love in the morning, and your own fair fame at night? Speak, are you ill? Good God! are those sobs—I must see you!”

As he spoke, with a gentle force, he removed the bonnet and veil, he unclapsed the fair hands, and the light of the moon fell on the back of the Grecian head,

and twisted golden braids, and the slender, swan-like throat of Violet, whose face sank on his knee, as she tried to hide her features in his military cloak.

Colonel Pevensey, who had had no doubt that in removing the bonnet and veil he should discover the Juno-like head, the jet-black hair, and fine, but full-sized throat of Jeannetta Orde, was for a moment silent in utter amazement. During that silence, many thoughts were rushing through his mind. Those beautiful, eloquent, and impassioned letters—those romantic and devoted vigils, which had led him to the haughty Jeannetta—they sprang then from the wild and devoted passion of this gifted and beautiful girl!

And what was he to do with all this tenderness, this idolatry? Colonel Pevensey was a man of the world, but not in the worst sense of the term, and therefore he was at a loss how to act and what to say.

"You are disappointed," at length said Violet, mournfully, her woman instinct leading her thus to construe his silence—"you thought it was another; but I never meant to deceive you—I tried all I could to escape you, and I meant never to watch your windows again, after this one night!"

As she spoke in sad and humble deprecation of his wrath, she turned her beautiful face towards him, and as the moonlight fell on its fair and exquisite young features and the tears that trembled in her violet eyes, the colonel felt that, in order to keep his first manly resolution, of not destroying her because she loved him, he must not look into those eyes or on that face again.

"Sweet Violet," he said, "anger and disappointment have nothing to do with the silence that distresses you—I did believe I should look on another face certainly, but not on a fairer, believe me! The exquisite letters, and the beautiful, but rash marks of interest, you have honoured me with, attributed by me to another, had inspired me with an admiration for that other, which—"

"Oh, I know, I know it all," said Violet. "You believed, because you wished to believe it, that the beautiful Jeannetta Orde alone had a heart and mind capable of appreciating yours. And you love her—and you despise the rash—the weak—the humble—"

Tears choked her voice.

The colonel forgot his good and generous resolves. He took her hands, and said, "No, Violet, you wrong me. Your soft and Psyche-like beauty is more, far more to my taste than the Juno charms of Miss Orde. If my imagination has been captivated by her, it is because I invested her with that exquisite genius, and that sweet rash, feminine devotion which it seems are yours, sweet Violet, and not hers! I am almost afraid to own to myself and to you what the effect will be, of my admitting the conviction that those enchanting letters were traced by this hand, and that it is this delicate and trembling form I have seen watching the windows of my poor home!"

"Why should you be afraid," timidly asked poor Violet, "to feel for me the interest you began to feel for Jeannetta, when you thought she—valued you as I do?"

Colonel Pevensey could not find it in his heart to explain to the poor girl that he could make Miss Orde his wife, and the mother of his darlings, but that his pride revolted at the idea of raising to that dignity the humble, obscure actress of a provincial theatre, however bright her genius, however spotless her character, however exquisite her beauty, and however perfect her devotion!

A silence of a few minutes succeeded to Violet's simple question; a variety of thoughts and feelings kept Colonel Pevensey silent, and good and bad resolutions rapidly flitted across his worldly mind. He believed Violet to be spotless in conduct and passionately in love with himself; and this passion he had no doubt would keep her, even in her perilous situation, for a time at least, safe from all meaner and coarser snares. But of the child-like purity of the wild love she felt for him, he was incapable of forming any conception: the question in his mind was, whether he should affect a sternness he did not feel, and save her from herself and him, or whether he should meet with fondness, if not with love, the passion of this beautiful and bewitching creature; and as in his worldly code it was certain that sooner or later she must fall, whether he should not avail himself of his own good fortune in having inspired such devotion, and bear

her to some lovely home, where love, as long as it lasted, should link their hearts together.

"It is better she should be mine, loving me thus," thought the man of the world, "than fall a prey, unprotected and defenceless as she is, to some titled brute or some villain in her own degraded class. If I fling her off, her wounded heart must attach itself to something, and if she is true to me I will secure her from want—a moderate annuity will do that. But she may endear herself so much to me as to become necessary to my happiness; she may have children whom I shall love; then I will always keep her in an elegant home, and supply her handsomely in every way, and this will be surely better than her present laborious and ill-paid profession."

He looked into Violet's face as he came to this worldly decision—the moonlight streamed full upon it. Her eyes were raised to his, but the feeling he read in them was so much like the adoration some saint might inspire, that he felt ashamed of his own cold and calculating worldliness, and he looked with tender pity upon her as he decided in his own mind that it would be best and wisest to drive her from him for ever.

"How is all this to end, my sweet one?" he said at length, almost unconsciously putting back her beautiful hair, and touching with a soft and almost timid kiss her fair and open forehead. To him, that gentle kiss, almost such as he might have impressed on his Clarissa's forehead, was nothing; but to Violet it was the first kiss of him she loved with all the passionate fervour of genius, of youth, and of the peculiar devotion of her character.

For a moment the colour forsook her lips and cheeks, her eyes closed, the hand he held grew damp and chill in his own, her head sunk on his breast, and, in the intensity of her emotion, consciousness forsook her! Oh love, love!

The vanity of man, gratified by this strange tribute to his power—this wild proof of, as he thought, all-absorbing passion—supplied the place of love, and Pevensey caught her to his bosom, and his passionate embrace recalled her to herself.

In his coarser nature he had again mistaken her, and

if his first timid kiss, so pure, so holy, so all her virgin fancy had conceived of him she adored, had filled her heart with an ecstasy too subtle and too powerful for her delicate frame, the warm embrace of commonplace passion frightened and offended her, and, to Colonel Pevensy's surprise, she angrily insisted on his releasing, and haughtily desired him to leave her.

"Most incomprehensible and most bewitching of little girls!" he said, half-piqued at this repulse; "how have I been so unfortunate as to offend you! Am I to love you, or am I not? and how, as I said before, is all this to end?"

"To love me! Oh, Colonel Pevensy, there is no love that is not based on the most delicate respect, and the most entire esteem. It is thus I love you, and thus alone would I be loved by you. Do not make me fear for one moment that there is aught of clay in the idol my heart has enshrined! So pure, so noble, so exalted, so refined, and so intellectual have you seemed to me, that to love you seems like loving an angel, not a man."

"Alas! dear girl," said the colonel, "you love not me, but some being of your own romantic fancy, whom you are pleased to invest with my poor form; I am not only a man, my child, but that most commonplace of men, a man of the world. I adore your beauty—I admire your genius—I am gratified by your preference; but I am a thing of vanity and of passion, of experience and of calculation—and, therefore, I say, how is all this to end?"

"To end! it can never end but with my life. You are so generous, so noble, you think my love for you may injure me, and you seek to disenchant me; you pretend to be coarse, commonplace, heartless—of this earth, earthy—to save me from a love which may expose me to ridicule or scorn; but your heavenly eyes deny the commonplaces of your lips, and while your words would prove you so cold and mean a man, your looks, untutored, proclaim you an angel still."

"My poor, poor child," said Colonel Pevensy, mournfully, "some few years hence, when you know this world a little better, you will smile at the girlish romance you now look upon as a sober reality. There can be no intercour-

such as you describe between man and woman in this world, and least of all can such exist between you and me."

"Oh, do not say so," said Violet, throwing herself on her knees before him, and hiding her face on his knee. "Can you not meet me at early dawn, before the prying, busy, gossiping world is awake—and can we not roam hand in hand by the wild sea and watch the sun rise, and gild the waves, like love illumining our path of life—and shall I not make you a bower in the cliffs, and store my basket with a breakfast love shall make delicious? My hands shall kindle the fire—my hands prepare your coffee—my hands alone shall wait upon and tend you—and then you shall return to your duties, and I to mine; and sometimes you shall come and sit with me in my little room and read to me, and teach me from your own refined and gifted mind how to embody the loveliest conceptions of Shakspeare, and how to win renown, and, perhaps, immortality! And then you will come to the theatre and encourage your poor pupil; and were thousands present, to me there would be but one, and the sight of your noble face shining on me will change a life of monotonous toil into one of perpetual and inspiring delight! And then, when all is hushed, and none are awake but lovers, and the moon comes out to light them to their rendezvous, we will meet as we have met to-night, and sit together by the sea, and I will tell you all I have thought by day and dreamt by night, as you will me; and then we will part to meet again at dawn and roam to our bower in the cliffs!"

How often, as the young enthusiast spoke, her colour rising, her bosom heaving, and the water sparkling in her eyes, a smile, half of pity, half of scorn, wreathed the colonel's lip! What an Arcadian shepherd would the girl make of a middle-aged colonel, a man of fashion, of pleasure, of the world! To meet her at dawn to breakfast in the cliffs! to sit in her little room, and then steal out at night to sit by the sea! Had he, like Violet, but counted eighteen summers, he might have been rash enough to embark on this voyage of love and romance; but as it was, though he liked to listen to her fond scheming, he felt sometimes almost nettled at being associated, even in fancy, with such girlish folly.

"And when winter comes, sweet Violet," he said, "and come it will, what then becomes of bowers in the cliff, and siestas by the sea?"

"Oh, there is no winter in the heart, and storms without will make our bower in the cliffs a sweeter shelter; but if you do not think so, there is my little fireside, and my love, which will make a summer everywhere. Say you like the prospect—say it need not end—say—"

"Like Romeo, I can only say good night, though—

"Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say, good night, till it be morrow!"

But rise, sweet Violet, and let me see you home; and to-morrow we will talk of these things again."

"Oh yes, to-morrow; would to-morrow were already here! When and where shall we meet?"

"You shall hear from me, dearest!"

Hear from him! Oh, the rapture, the ecstasy of possessing a letter, written by him, and addressed to her! Here was an inlet to new joy—here was something to live for, to hope for, to dream of, to ponder on!

He gave her his arm—he held her hand in his—she moved by his side too blest for words, though now and then, "dearest! kindest! best!" escaped her lips; and once she raised his hand to her lips, and he felt that there were tears on her cheeks!

Oh, could she have looked into his heart—could she have seen the curious mixture of vanity, tenderness, admiration, scorn, anger, impatience, that possessed it—could she have understood his struggle between the generosity which almost prompted him to make her his wife, the worldly sensuality which urged him to propose to her to be his mistress, and the common sense and honour which almost impelled him to shun her for ever—would she have adored, have worshipped him thus!

The walk home, which seemed but one delicious moment to her, was not without its charm to him. Her beauty, her grace, her eloquence, intellect, and *naïveté*, amused him; her admiration gratified his vanity, and her devotion touched his heart; but at thirty-seven, love is not the omnipotent deity he is at twenty, and the last thought of Colonel Pevensey, connected with Violet, as

he laid his head on his pillow, was the commonplace one "that it would not do, and that he must put a stop to it."

He was too old and too experienced, too much a man of the world and of pleasure, *pour filer le parfait amour* at her feet, and play Nemorin to her Estelle; she was not fit to be his wife, and too good and too pure to be his mistress, and so there must be an end to it, and he must write and say so.

Thus did he dismiss her image from his thoughts; and she, the while, was praying for him with weeping eyes, recalling his every look, word, and tone, and at length fell asleep with the delightful remembrance that he had promised to write to her; and she, oh, how she hoped she might sleep till that promise was fulfilled, and his letter came!

Poor child! Poor child!

Absorbed in her own emotions, and engrossed by his presence, Violet did not know that on her way home she had been seen and watched by one who saw but her on earth, and whose life was one vigil for her sake.

The young private, whose emotion at the death scene in "Romeo and Juliet," as personated by Violet, had caused him to faint away and to be carried out of the theatre insensible, was, as the reader has probably anticipated, that devoted cousin whose love for Violet had sent him from home in search of her, and exposed him to that extremity of distress and famine in which he had easily fallen a prey to the recruiting sergeant. He went to the theatre to endeavour, in listening to a play associated with early memories of love and happiness, to shake off a little of the intense dejection with which disappointed affection and the monotonous and degrading drudgery of his life as a private in so severely disciplined a regiment, overwhelmed his spirit. There, for the first time, he saw Violet, since she had left her home—saw her with all the advantages of dress—of stage effect—of conscious genius and acknowledged popularity—and under the influence of a passion which, with her, was an inspiration, and made her seem the very Juliet of the poet, warm and palpitating with life.

He watched her through every scene with absorbing

and increasing rapture; and in the last, the reality she gave to the death of Juliet caused such a sudden revolution in his heart that he fell back, as we have said, insensible, and was carried out. Violet, engrossed entirely by Colonel Pevensy's presence, had not seen him; nor was she aware that he had found out her abode—had watched her out and in; and that while she lay dreaming of Pevensy he was walking, maddened by jealousy, and fevered by despair, up and down the little street she dwelt in, and dark thoughts of murder and suicide moving across his fevered brain.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE VERDICT.

THE coroner's inquest sat upon the body of the old miser. The investigation was long and minute. Rosalie's evidence was given, and accounted for the fact that the strong box, in which she had seen so many bags of gold and rolls of bank-notes, was empty. The amount which Mrs. Orde had paid to Grimshaw the night before was in his desk; and large sums of money were found in his wretched pillow, his miserable mattress, and in the private drawers of his antique *bureau*.

Rosalie's was almost the only evidence of importance; for she alone had had any recent conversation with the deceased. One of the servants of the house deposed to her having met him on the stairs, and to his having appeared more than usually sullen and morose; and the count's man-servant, Sylvio, swore to having opened the door to an elderly man of respectable appearance, who went straight to the miser's room, and shortly after, Sylvio asserted that he opened the street door to the same man carrying a carpet bag.

This confirmed the miser's statement (as repeated to Rosalie), that the owner of the money she found him counting over, was coming to claim it; and her account of his despondency and fatal forebodings, together with his probable anguish at giving up so large a sum, after possessing it so long, determined the verdict—although

an expression of doubt and dissatisfaction still darkened the surgeon's countenance.

The verdict was, that "The deceased, a man of eccentric, secluded, and most parsimonious habits, having been for some time past in bad health, and dejected state of mind, had destroyed himself in a fit of temporary insanity."

The savings found in the miser's *bureau*, pillow, and mattress, together with the house in which he lived and its furniture, and several other lodging-houses in Brighton, amounted in value to the sum of twenty thousand pounds; the whole of which was inherited, as no will was to be found, by his heirs-at-law, and only relatives, a nephew and niece.

The niece was a very beautiful and interesting young woman of five-and-twenty, whom he had himself placed as junior teacher, some ten years before, in a school at Brighton, and where by her talents and good conduct she had risen to be head governess; and the nephew was a copying clerk in an attorney's office, in very delicate health, but so industrious as to have earned the goodwill of his employers, in spite of his bodily weakness and mental disgust of the sedentary drudgery of his situation.

To these children the old man had never given half-a-crown, and had constantly assured them when he called to see them, that, as he himself was on the eve of bankruptcy and beggary, they must look entirely to their own industry and talents for support, present and future. On several occasions Mary and Walter Hall, entirely believing his assertions, had presented him with small sums from their savings, and had united to purchase the materials, which Mary in her hours of recreation had made up, of a set of shirts for him.

It seemed probable, by his making no will, that the miser was aware that these children, as heirs-at-law, would inherit his property—and never was an unexpected and costly legacy more welcome or better deserved. Mary Hall had long been hopelessly attached, and all but engaged, to the Reverend Mr. Darwin (curate of St. —, Brighton, and daily tutor to Colonel Pevensy's son, Marmaduke); but his generous support of his

aged and infirm mother, and of three sisters, had made Mary resolute not to add to his heavy incumbrances that of a portionless wife.

Now, with a fortune of ten thousand pounds, Mary was no longer coy. Pride and reserve melted away at once, and she herself, in a letter to Mr. Darwin, full of exquisite tenderness and womanly devotion, proposed that, after the term for mourning for her poor uncle had expired, he should prove the sincerity of his attachment, and make her his wife.

As for Walter, who, while so conscientiously adhering to his soulless and monotonous employment, had always so hated it, and cultivated, in his brief leisure, the classical studies he had begun before his father died, to him the blessing of this unexpected fortune was, if possible, greater still.

He purposed reading in some salubrious and healthy spot, with a private tutor, till he was fit for Oxford, and there keeping his terms, taking his degree, and probably entering the Church.

After the verdict, and the burial of the old miser, Mrs. Orde and her family made eager preparations for leaving Brighton. The Baron de Saint Felix tendered, through Captain Crèveœur, a very humble apology to Miss Jenny, which was coldly and scornfully accepted; to herself he offered no explanation of his conduct, but to Mrs. Orde and her daughters, he confessed that it was a very bad joke, meant to try the reality of the old lady's hatred of mankind, and the silly offspring of the whim of a moment.

The reader and Miss Jenny know better, but this explanation gained general credence.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SEASON IN TOWN.

How delightful to the enamoured and enthusiastic Jeanetta, was the season of courtship! How fond, how tender, how deferential was her suitor! How exquisite seemed all the pleasures of London, shared with him!

How, when she played or sang, he listened enraptured to her performance—how, when she worked or drew, he lingered by her side, to praise and to encourage! What magic progress he made in English, under her instruction! How early did he come!—how late did he stay! How, if any accident kept him from her, some adoring billet and exquisite bouquet, or other love-token, reminded her how much he loved her, and how bitterly he regretted the brief absence!

In private, his favourite place was at her feet—in public, he was ever by her side. During three or four nightly balls during the season, he never wearied of the waltz or the polka with her. Whatever she said was good, whatever she did was right, whatever she preferred was best, whatever she disliked was odious, whatever she wore was exquisite.

In courtship how often is it thus; and oh, what a sad, sad preparatory establishment, for one who is to pass through the ordeal of wedlock, and perhaps to take a high degree in the schools of suffering and sorrow!

It is like sedulously spoiling a child at home, humouring its caprices, gratifying its whims, idolizing its beauty, and feeding all its little wilful appetites for forbidden pleasures, and then sending it to a stern schoolmistress, and among inimical, and harsh, and jeering schoolfellows—to find its own level, and learn humility through shame and misery.

Jeannetta cannot believe (what idolized *fiancées* can?) that the time will ever come, when she will be kept waiting, not by the minute, but the hour—when her gentle reproach will be received, not with contrite anguish, but with haughty contempt or sarcastic rudeness—when whatever she does will be wrong—whatever she says silly—whatever she prefers will be odious—whatever she dislikes will be exquisite—when her looks will be coarsely criticised, her dress, if economical, spitefully abused, if costly and elegant, bitterly grudged!

Jeannetta, who so loves her mother, her sister, and even her eccentric great-aunt, Miss Jenny—Jeannetta, who smiles with such grateful fondness on her Gonzalve, for his delicate attentions to all her dear ones—his brotherly and sweet affection for Rosalie, his

respectful devotion to her mother, and his patient and well-bred endurance of all Miss Jenny's attacks and eccentricities—can she believe that the time will ever come when he will see them all with an evil eye—because she is his own—because he has nothing more to win, or to hope, or to fear from her—because “custom has come with its inevitable curse,” and desire has ended in satiety, and love in loathing?

Will he, her *beau-idéal*, her generous, her proud one—will he, now so lavish of every tribute, ever grudge these dear ones, with surlily watchfulness, the commonplace hospitality of his roof and his table?

Can he ever defy her mother, quarrel with her sister, and offend or ridicule her poor eccentric great-aunt?

Instead of hanging enraptured over the piano while she plays and sings, will he ever from a distant sofa or arm-chair, indulging in an odious stable-boy whistle, or plying a detestable toothpick, beg her to cease her strumming, and perhaps (deficient himself in taste, science, or ear) criticise the performance of natural talent and cultivated skill, and wind up with a pompous decision that the sweet notes he once proclaimed to be the music of the spheres, are harsh and out of tune?

Out of tune, alas! they are out of tune with his altered feelings—his cold, inconstant, callous heart; for they still breathe harmony, tenderness, and it may be a gentle, but to him unbearable reproach?

Again, can Jeannetta believe that the landscapes he now so lauds, and the heads he takes such pride in, will ever be coldly and impatiently pushed aside, the former as daubs deficient in perspective, the latter as failures quite out of drawing?—that all her ingenious and feminine fancy works will be designated as expensive trash, and silly waste of time?—and that he, who now thinks the most delicate and refined occupations too gross for her “fairy fingers,” will ever surlily advocate their abrogating to themselves the offices of her household maidens, the drudgery of shirt-making, the—

“Stitch, stitch, stitch,
Band, and gusset, and seam!”

the meaner drudgery of darning stockings, and the end—

less task of sewing on buttons, torn off in impatience or ill-humour?

Can Jeannetta imagine that he who now rushes to her assistance as she dispenses the tea and coffee, and blames the tea-pot and the coffee-pot as too heavy for her delicate hand—can she imagine that he will ever reproach her with ignorance of those arts of gastronomy in which our fore-mothers excelled (wise women were they, for they knew one road to the heart was through the palate)?—that she will have to bear the blame of every culinary failure, be reproached with every *pièce de resistance* under or over-done, and be responsible for every *entremet manqué*, or forgotten sauce?—that he will make her defective housekeeping a favourite source of reproach and quarrel, even while withholding entirely, bitterly grudging, or unwillingly doling out, the grand *mobile* of all housekeeping—money?—that the devoted family affection he now so respects and so approves, will ever be pronounced “a childish weakness, a cursed nuisance, and a deuced bore?”

Well it is indeed for the world (if people *are* to marry and be given in marriage) that an impenetrable curtain is drawn between the present and the future—between “courtship and wedlock;” for the change we have described awaits many a bride; modified, of course, according to the circumstances and position of her husband, from the neglect in public and sneer in private of the cold aristocrat, down to the lowest orders of brutal and unrestrained passions, where man and wife still mean “*baron et femme*—the master and his woman;” and where, in spite of “the scanty measure of partial and reluctant protection and amelioration wrung from the legislature,” and smuggled in, in clauses and sections, instead of being blazoned forth by the entire repeal of a brutal law, the husband or master still glories in the old and savage right recorded by Blackstone, allowing him “*flagellis et fustibus acriter verberare uxorem*.”

And after all, what if public opinion and the growth of refinement, and clauses against personal violence, and “assault and battery,” protect the wife from the “sticks and whips” of the olden time: what can protect her from

that scourge of scorpions, the tongue of ill-temper—what can save her best and holiest affections from the stab—what her most innocent actions from the restraint caused by the perpetual fear of disapproval—what her peace and household cheerfulness from the effect of that Gorgon of the heart—a frowning, scowling face?

There is but one safeguard; and in the hurry of passion, the temporary insanity of love, and the giddy impulse of vanity, how seldom does woman in giving herself up inquire whether this safeguard is really hers! *This safeguard is a true Christian sense of religion in the man to whom she binds herself*;—that religion which acknowledges the greatest of its attributes to be charity—a charity so universal that it extends its heavenly and ennobling influence even to domestic intercourse and household sway—that charity that *suffereth long and is kind*—that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, *is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil*, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, *beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*.

To any one who has pondered on that sad and dark subject, domestic discord and wedded misery, so rife throughout the land that exceptions astonish, it will be evident that woman's only safeguard is in the selection of a man whose heart is really under the influence of that religion, based on the diffusive charity recorded above.

The charity that *suffereth long and is kind* would protect her from the angry impatience, the harsh and hasty refusal of some reasonable request, the wanton sting or cruel stab to some affection of her heart.

The charity that *envieth not* would protect her, if in any way endowed above her lord and above her fellows, from disparagement, detraction, and depreciation.

The charity that *vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up*, would save her from that frequent cause of quarrel and estrangement, the assertion of immeasurable superiority in the man, of degrading inferiority in the woman, the boast of absolute power, the irritating and inflated self-aggrandizement. Whereas the man's superiority should be so great, and so real, as to be quietly and irresistibly, not pompously and noisily proclaimed: *indeed*,

if it does not proclaim itself, its existence is more than doubtful.

The charity that doth not behave unseemly will protect the wife from all those minor rudenesses, those petty and revolting breaches of good-breeding, so carefully avoided before marriage—often, alas! so grossly indulged in after! The toothpick, the cigar, the muddy boots, the want of punctuality, the rude address, the short or snappish answer, the ill-bred silence, the slovenly attire, the insulting neglect and indifference in public the harsh word and cutting jibe in private,—from all these, and a thousand other wounding, stinging, but very general *oublis des convenances*, would the wife be protected by the “charity that doth not behave itself unseemly;” for all these things *are most unseemly*.

The charity that seeketh not her own will certainly protect her from that greedy, martial assumption of all rights, power, and resources which make the poor wife a mere puppet in a household.

If “not easily provoked,” what harsh retorts for unmeant attacks, and what cruel jibes for unintentional short-comings will the wife be spared! The charity that thinketh no evil must protect her every deed from misconstruction, her looks from censure, and her words from misrepresentation.

The charity that rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, will keep the husband pure himself, and proud of purity in her, and make him glory in her truth and in his own.

The charity that beareth all things will make the husband patient of her weakness of mind or body—gentle if she is quick, gentle if she is slow. It will make him forgive her faults, and palliate her failings.

The charity that believeth all things will save the wife’s loyal and sensitive heart from the stinging sense of suspicion and distrust, and its noble confidence will beget devotion.

The charity that hopeth all things will secure the wife from the murmurs of discontent and despondency, and the domestic atmosphere from the gloom of dejection and despair.

While, to sum up all, that charity that endureth all

things is proof at once against great evils and minor annoyances—against ruin abroad, or a rainy day at home—against bankruptcy of name and fortune, or a button off a shirt—against a bad investment, or a bad dinner—a prodigal son, or a smoking chimney—an undutiful daughter, or a creaking door—an incurable disease, or a crying babe—an invalid wife, or an untidy room—a raging tooth-ache, or gummy ink, greasy paper, and an incurable pen, with the post going out, or a messenger hurrying for an answer,—against being made responsible herself, for all these and countless other great and serious misfortunes, or small and teasing annoyances, often more difficult to bear patiently; for some men have died bravely, who would have ill-endured the tooth-ache, and a hurdy-gurdy or bag-pipe under his window has infuriated an author who has borne with patience the failure of a work to which he had devoted his life!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHILE the happy and sunny days of courtship pass so fleetly over Jeannetta's beautiful head, Lady Beauchamp, unknown to her sister-in-law, has affianced herself to Crèveœur, and is the object of attentions as devoted and acceptable, though not as delicate and refined. Lady Beauchamp, like so many women of fashion of a certain age, is a great *gastronome*, an epicure in eating and drinking, and has more than once, in seasons of trial and trouble, narrowly escaped acquiring the deadly habit of seeking temporary oblivion in intoxication! Liqueurs and champagne, these were the "passions" of Lady Beauchamp, and Crèveœur soon discovered these propensities, and flattered them accordingly: cases of choicest sillery and of maraschino, crème de noyau, eau de vie de Dantzic, parfait amour, curaçoa, and rosolio were the libations he poured out at her shrine; and grievously did these offerings confirm her unwomanly and perilous predilection, and feed in the most costly, lavish, and enticing manner that taste which is death—death to mind and body!

During the short time necessary to Lady Beauchamp to procure her *trousseau*, the captain (between whom and Mrs. Orde a sudden and unexplained coldness had arisen) spent most of his time in driving Lady Beauchamp to different *restaurants* and taverns in London and the suburbs, high in repute for the excellence of their wines, and the delicacy of their cookery. On these occasions, Lady Beauchamp (for appearance' sake) was always accompanied by some female *bon-vivante* of fashion and quality, who shared the expenses of these epicure feasts, and saved, by her presence, the fair fame of Lady Beauchamp from suspicion and from slander.

Sometimes it was a dainty French repast at Very's, sometimes a substantial, first-rate English dinner at the Star and Garter, Richmond. Sometimes a turtle and venison feast at Long's or Mivart's, sometimes a white-bait dinner at Greenwich, or a fish banquet at the East or West India Dock taverns, Blackwall. The gay elderly epicures who contributed their company and their gold to these expensive entertainments, had no cause to complain of the captain as a caterer or a paymaster.

His own expenditure was most liberal and even lavish. He always drove the party in his own equipage, and often added to the repast dainties and liqueurs beyond the reach of the tavern-keepers.

Lady Beauchamp's friends congratulated her, while they envied her, her handsome, good-humoured, devoted, generous, and evidently most wealthy conquest; and all advised her not to let milliners or lawyers delay the ceremony, which was to make her the lawful sharer of Crèveœur's wealth, and secure her so fine-looking and so amiable a husband!

The Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon, so remarkable for the beauty of his person, the dignity and reserve of his manners, and the elegance and expenditure of the bachelor establishment he shared with the captain and the baron, was the object, in London, of that excessive admiration and interest so often lavished on any showy-looking foreigner. His devotion to Jeannetta did not prevent his making hundreds of useless conquests among the fair of May Fair. Single and (to their shame be it spoken) married women too, did all they could to attract

his notice and shake his faith. The more he tried to seclude himself (and he did earnestly try to do so), the more were the ladies of London resolved to have him at their dinners, at their balls, in their opera-boxes, and, if possible, at their feet.

When Jeannetta and Rosalie were presented, Mrs. Orde made a great point of his being presented too, and a dozen noblemen (urged by their wives) disputed for that honour. He went with the Ordes to the palace balls, and wherever he went, whatever royal, noble, or beautiful lips and eyes smiled upon him, he never unbent from his proud and dignified reserve, except by Jeannetta's side, and never paid to any other beauty any attentions but those demanded by the etiquette of society.

Throughout that season, which Mrs. Orde insisted on their sharing together before their union, all his object seemed to be to hasten his nuptials with Jeannetta, all his happiness to adore and to attend her, and all his desire to keep himself as much as possible aloof from all his followers and admirers, male and female, particularly those of his own country, whom, for some reason or other (perhaps jealousy of their attentions to Jeannetta, and dread of their fascinations) he avoided as much as possible.

The Baron de Saint Felix, finding nothing was to be done with Rosalie or Miss Jenny, had made pointed attempts at insinuating himself into the good graces of Mrs. Orde himself; but that lady, deeply wounded by the inconstancy and neglect of the captain, whom she she had really been weak enough to like, and suspecting that the stipulations of her husband's will (perhaps betrayed by Lady Beauchamp) had caused the captain's desertion and would have the same effect on the baron, determined to nip all hope in the bud, and to consider "courtship and wedlock" henceforth as matters in which she had no interest except on her daughters' account.

Indeed it is but justice to her to say that, though the attentions, the attractions, and the reputed wealth of a man near her own age had disposed her to a second marriage, she was no regular husband-hunter, and would have felt rather insulted than complimented by the inte-

rested attentions of a French fop, young enough to be her son ! The Baron de Saint Felix, however, after he had once been launched into London society, found the charms of his person, his light moustache, soft blue eyes, *air militaire*, and, above all, his claims as a baron and a foreigner, made him the object of so much female attention, and so popular at balls and soirees, that he laughed at his folly in having dreamt of selling himself for Miss Jenny's six hundred a-year—and began to suspect that many a pretty girl, worth more thousands than Rosalie could boast, would gladly become Baronne de Saint Felix.

It was not certainly in the highest or most exclusive circles that any of the party moved, if we except Gonzalve, Count de Montfaucon, to whom, had he chosen to avail himself of the privilege, every house of importance was open. But Mrs. Orde, Lady Beauchamp, the captain, and the baron moved in that extensive London circle, composed of what we before stated may be called the aspiring class—a class in which the fag-end of the nobility amalgamates with the gentry, with the families of beneficed clergymen, naval and military officers, wealthy merchants, bankers, great stock-brokers, great brewers—a class in which baronets, knights, and M.P.'s abound, but are still made much of, and looked up to ; where lords and ladies are considered as stars of first-rate magnitude, and made a fuss with, and boasted of ; where to be presented is considered an achievement to be manœuvred for, not calmly claimed as an hereditary right ; where a ticket to Almack's is considered an acquisition, and an invitation to the palace a triumph and distinction : a class in which lions and lionesses are exhibited, and teased for contributions to albums, and where foreigners, with a title of any kind, are the most favoured and popular of beaux. Mrs. Orde and Lady Beauchamp, it is true, had claims to move in a far more exalted and aristocratic sphere than this ; but in this accident had placed them, and in this many were contented to move with them, who preferred being notabilities here, to being unremarked in a higher circle. The Countess of Manvers was one of the suns of this system, and happier when handed down to dinner, as

the lady of highest rank present, by Sir This, or Colonel or Admiral That, that when following in the wake of greater luminaries, at the aristocratic banquets of her sister peeresses.

To those unacquainted with the intricate machinery of London society, it would seem that those who went to court, to Almack's, who were occasionally invited to the palace, and received the nobility at their tables and their balls, must be in the first circles, and among the *élite*; and yet, in spite of all this, they may be as completely shut out as the *peri* from paradise.

Many a plain Mr. ——— would scorn to figure at a ball given by one of the "aspiring class," though a list of noble names and titles might shine among the guests; and Colonel Pevensey would as soon have thought of dancing at Vauxhall, or rolling down the hill at Greenwich Fair, as of figuring at any entertainment given by any member of this class; from which, however, he would have chosen a wife, but out of which, had she accepted him, he would have entirely removed her.

Of this extensive circle, the Baron de Saint Felix soon became the pride, the pet, the *enfant gâté*, and, among many young ladies who smiled upon him, he selected, as the object of his serious attentions, a tall, dark, and handsome Miss Juliana Mostyn, about six-and-twenty, the daughter of Colonel Mostyn, a gentleman with a very large West India property, and living in very elegant and expensive style.

It was probably the reputed wealth of this lady, and the many sumptuous banquets and brilliant balls to which he was invited by her mamma, that induced the Baron de Saint Felix to fix upon Juliana Mostyn as his future baronne; for though he professed the most ardent passion, she was not at all to his taste, and though she was very condescending and very accessible, she did not like, in the countless pier-glasses of her mother's drawing-rooms, to see how much she towered above him. A great disadvantage to both was this untoward contrast, since Miss Mostyn's height made the little baron look femininely small and slight; and his diminutive proportions gave her a somewhat masculine appearance.

However, if love is an omnipotent god in reconciling all disproportions and discrepancies of all kinds, Plutus is not behind-hand with him; and the twenty thousand pounds which old Mostyn promised to give his daughter, with the great expectancies he more than hinted at, made Juliana altogether the most promising of those attainable damsels who had smiled on the agreeable little "baron."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TRAPPER TRAPPED.

So then our three foreigners are on the eve of making excellent matches!

The Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon to a young, a beautiful, and devoted woman, passionately attached to him, amiable, accomplished, well-born, with a good fortune, and with excellent expectations.

And in spite of the general, and, we must think, well-founded objection to foreign alliances, we must say that the count and his intended seemed most admirably matched—their beauty, their dignity, their exclusive and impassioned devotion, all were in perfect harmony.

But both were, alas! formed to shine rather in courtship than wedlock. High thoughts, noble aspirations, impassioned devotion, intellectual absorption, and poetical or sentimental reverie, of what avail are they in a state which demands rather the commonplace virtues of patience, discretion, compliance, amiability, imperturbable good humour, and meek and quiet contentment?

Now all these qualities Rosalie eminently possessed, set off by that soft, feminine prettiness, and Hebe bloom, that exquisite neatness and fresh simplicity of attire, which are far more important in a wife than the stately, queen-like charms, that always seem to require the tiara and the robe, and to be out of place anywhere but in drawing-rooms and banqueting halls. It seems almost impossible that the "most thorough-bred and fairest fingers" should ever employ themselves in sewing on a button, still less darning a hole, and one cannot believe that the housekeeper's room could ever be honoured

by the presence of that stately form. Its descent into a kitchen would be indeed an anomaly. However, it is only in the possible reverses of these days of domestic earthquakes, this epoch of ups and downs, that such extreme condescension could be expected of one, by birth a lady and by marriage a countess. But in all ranks of life, under the very loftiest, a taste for, and a knowledge of, domestic economy and good housekeeping, is of essential importance to happiness in the married state, and to the comfort of home.

Some women—indeed we trust the greater number—are born with this taste and talent, which is as decided a one as a genius for music, for poetry, or for painting; and where it is not innate it is very difficult to acquire it, and perhaps never really obtained in perfection. Those who have it not, were meant by nature for “single blessedness;” and yet it is an important contradiction, that these very women, so unfitted for wedlock, are most brilliant and bewitching in courtship. To this circumstance may be traced, alas! many of the comfortless, ill-regulated homes, and many of the unhappy matches so rife in our land.

Jeannetta and her count were now formally engaged; and at the end of a month their wedding was to take place at Mrs. Orde’s country seat, Fairfield Hall. The Baron de Saint Felix, whose attachment was of such a much more recent date, was subjected to a much less severe and protracted ordeal. His own anxiety to be settled in life was fortunately, but very unusually, met by a similar, or perhaps a greater, impatience on the part of the lady and her parents. Colonel and Mrs. Mostyn meditated a visit to the baths of Hamburg for incipient rheumatism, and they were generously anxious to see the young people settled before they set out.

The young baron’s estates being (as he said) in the south of France, and descending naturally to any children his lady might bring him, were not to be brought into settlement; but with a sum of five thousand pounds in gold and bank notes, he in a perfectly unusual manner (supposed to be foreign) gladdened the eyes of his future father and mother-in-law, and this trifle, as they justly and rather scornfully termed it, they permitted him to

settle on their child ! It was forthwith invested in the three per cents at the father's suggestion, for separate use, or pin-money.

This the baron did not very much like, but was ashamed to make any demur about such a trifle, when marrying a young girl of such good fortune and brilliant expectations.

He was, however, disappointed in some degree, as most fortune-hunters are at the last moment, for instead of paying down the whole or any part of Miss Mostyn's fortune in ready money, the father prepared, on account of the youth and inexperience of the young couple, to give his bond for the quarterly payment of two hundred pounds, making an income of eight hundred, which was secured on his West India property, and of which the capital would be forthcoming at his death, or when any very satisfactory investment presented itself.

The baron, who had revelled *d'avance* in anticipated thousands, looked and felt very blank and disappointed at this arrangement ; but Colonel Mostyn was a very off-hand and inscrutable person—Mrs. Mostyn a very haughty, sneering, and sarcastic woman—Juliana all obedience to her parents, and apparent ignorance and inexperience about money matters : she left, she said, all those mean, odious, huckster, and pettifogging arrangements to papa's lawyer, (and didn't care one penny whether she had a settlement or not ; she knew she could depend on her Hyacinthe's love and generosity, and felt sure he would give her more money than stingy papa had ever done ; but all this time the baron's poor five thousand pounds was being tightly tied up in the three per cents, and settled on the disinterested girl for her "separate use." The day was fixed, and the wedding, a strictly private one (on account, it was said, of the death of Mrs. Mostyn's aunt), took place ; and the first quarterly instalment of the eight hundred a-year was placed by the tall, corpulent, and Jewish-faced Colonel Mostyn, in the small hand of the little baron with the air of an emperor feeding a dancing-master. Juliana, with a splendid *trousseau*, was handed, by her little husband, whom she quite eclipsed, into a travelling chariot he had, by his father-in-law's advice, taken on trial, previous to its being pre-

sented by Colonel Mostyn ; and the four greys with their white favours, and the two post-boys similarly adorned, bore away the triumphant bride, majestic in her sweeping robes and floating plumes, inflated with crinoline, and expansive and expensive with flounces and furbelows ; so much for the new-made baronne ! The bridegroom looked as cross and sullen, and felt as discontented, as bridegrooms generally do at that epoch which is at once a wedding and a funeral—the wedding of their own persons, and the funeral of all their careless bachelor delights.

Indeed an envious bridesmaid, who had herself tried to captivate the Baron de Saint Felix, averred, that when the summer breeze, unfurling the bride's ample and gossamer draperies, completely enveloped the bridegroom's little person, he, in disentangling himself, among the titters and giggles of the ladies, uttered a very inexcusable and angry "Sacre !" When he took his place by his voluminous and animated partner, who was waving her large hand and long arm in adieu to her parents, and looking anxiously at the piles of packing cases containing her finery, the poor little fellow sank back with a heavy sigh, a real tear dimmed his light blue eye ; but he was soon quite lost sight of behind the ample skirts, countless flounces, and extensive pink satin visite of Juliana, Baronne de Saint Felix.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

As ever since the little baron's discomfiture at Brighton, in his gallant attack on the august man-hater, the scornful Miss Jenny, a great coldness had arisen between our friends and himself, the only intimation of his marriage with which they were honoured was a highly glazed envelope with a silver border, containing two cards, whose different sizes were admirably figurative of the relative proportions of himself and his baronne.

On the little one was engraved, "Le Baron Hyacinthe de Saint Felix," and on the large one, "La Baronne Hyacinthe de Saint Felix."

The marriage was announced in the *Morning Post*, and their departure on a tour to the lakes figured in the fashionable movements; and while the honeymoon, however clouded, shines upon the pair, we have no right to scrutinize their movements or their feelings, or let in the garish light of day upon their harmony or their discord.

The cards of the Baron and the Baronne de Saint Felix had scarcely been consigned to their receptacle, and the marriage and the wedded pair had scarcely been dismissed from the minds and the tongues of the Orde party, when Rosalie uttered a shriek of surprise as she darted forward to receive another bridal envelope, accompanied by what looked like a slice of a wooden cake, and was the deal enclosure of a section of that interesting dainty.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, "you will never, never guess who is married now!—and so funnily announced! Do guess—guess, Jeannetta—guess, Gonzalve—guess, dearest aunty! Guess what you would think the most unlikely match in the world!—but what I hinted I rather expected, though you all so scouted the idea."

"Oh, I cannot guess," said Jeannetta; "I never scouted any idea, nor heard of any hint, Rosa."

"No, my sweet sister, you are quite acquitted; for you live in a world of your own, and though your stately person moves among us, your lofty mind, with its noble mate, is in that more exalted sphere."

"Thy pretty sister may joke me now," said the count, "and make me blush myself; but I will have my time one day. What I read just now about one Gerard—Gerard—Gerard Esdaile, I tink."

Rosalie changed colour.

"What did you read, dear Gonzalve," she said, "about our earliest friend, our adopted brother?"

"Tell me who is married, and I will tell you what I read about him."

"A bargain," said Rosalie; "but do you guess, mamma."

"Old Miss Pickle," said Miss Orde; "she's the most unlikely person I know, except dear aunty there."

"The maist likely I ken," said Miss Jenny, "is the auld fule, Lady Beauchamp, and that auld philandering French captain (I beg yer pardon, count), Crève-cœur."

"Auntie is right—well done, auntie," laughed Rosalie; but her laugh ceased, when she saw her mother turn very pale, and rise from her chair to leave the room, to conceal a sudden burst of tears.

The party looked at each other in sorrow and amazement, but delicacy towards Mrs. Orde forbade any remark.

"You do not mean to say," said Jeannetta, "that aunt Beauchamp has married Gonzalve's friend, the captain?"

"I do indeed," said Rosalie, "and any one who was alive to what was going on at Brighton, would not wonder at the announcement. Look here. 'Le Capitaine Crèveœur,' and 'Lady Beauchamp Crèveœur!' Is not that an absurdity? By what right she keeps her first husband's name, now she has taken a second, it is impossible to discover, and except that one does not like one's father's sister to make a fool of herself, I do not see that it matters much to us. The captain is very rich and very good-humoured, and those are the great essentials in most marriages, and certainly would be in aunt Beauchamp's. I shall drink their health and happiness after dinner, when I produce this piece of cake. And now, Gonzalve, tell me what you have read about Gerard."

The count pointed to a paragraph in the paper, announcing that Gerard Esdaile, scholar of Baliol, and only son of the celebrated and learned divine, Doctor Esdaile, had just taken a double first class, and had obtained the prize for Latin prose and English verse.

It was now Rosalie's time to change colour, and to turn away to hide the emotion and agitation of her heart. Miss Jenny took up the paper and her spectacles, to certify herself that one of that reprobated race, called mankind, had really done anything indicative of genius and industry, and worthy of being recorded in the "pooblic journals."

The count and Rosalie were far too much absorbed in their own emotions, and in themselves, to give more than a few minutes' consideration to a success which, to poor Gerard, was of such vital importance, and, all unmarked, Rosalie left the room, and stole to her own chamber: there her pure young heart poured out its passionate

thanksgiving; and gratitude to the Creator, united with devotion to the creature, kept her on her knees (her fair face bathed in happy tears), till her mother, rendered anxious by her long absence, came to fetch her.

Mrs. Orde was pale, and had evidently been weeping, but her air was resolute, and her manner composed: she had driven the last foolish weakness of her heart away for ever; but it was like parting with the last-born of the bosom, the Benoni of the affections! It is very true that, after fifty, woman *ought* to have taken leave of love, in all his bewitching shapes, from flirtation to devotion. But when we consider the luxury it is to woman's heart to find herself essential to another's happiness, the fascinating occupation that an attachment gives to her mind, and the tenderness with which she clings to the last affection it is probable she will either feel or inspire, we ought to forgive her readiness to love, and to believe that she is yet lovely and beloved, even after ruthless time has marked her as his own, and she knows in her inmost heart that she ought to make friendship and family affection the only *culte* of her heart, and that she runs the frightful risk of ridicule and desertion in suffering herself even to dream of LOVE!

Mrs. Orde felt ashamed of Crève-cœur, but more ashamed of herself. She was angry with him, but far more angry still with her own silly heart and vain imagination. But the struggle was secret, and the triumph over her own weakness a silent one; and now, in the detected interest of her Rosalie in Gerard Esdaile, and her anxieties for the happiness of that attachment, which she now for the first time suspected, she forgot her own sorrows and her mortifying disappointment. Mrs. Orde had by this time seen so much of "great matches," in the entire estrangement of Lady Beauchamp's daughters—the marchese and the countess of Tunbridge—she had also so firm a conviction that Jeannetta would be very much lost to her in the foreign alliance she was about to form, that she began to sicken of ambition, and to dread the thoughts of grandeur in a son-in-law. Gerard Esdaile, with his true piety, his well-known principles, his long-tried regard for them all, his noble spirit, and his affectionate heart, became as much an object of

anxiety as he had been of avoidance; and she only feared lest the love he had cherished from boyhood for Jeannetta should be of too deep and exclusive a nature to admit of his ever returning that which Rosalie had evidently long nourished in secret for him.

But love, though he can exist on a very, very little hope, cannot live on without any at all. During Gerard's last interview with Jeannetta every scintilla of hope was extinguished in his bosom; Jeannetta's image in his heart was so completely uprooted that for a long time all was ruin there! That scene at Brighton, the conviction, not only that he was not loved, but that she adored another, the smouldering jealousy that lies in every loving bosom ready to break forth, had burst at once into volcanic fires—an earthquake of the affections was the result; and all the beautiful region of hope, and love, and confidence in woman and in himself, was a waste, blackened with the ashes of despair.

One would have imagined that, after this, Gerard would have done with love, and one would not believe that the victims of an earthquake would ever build again where their homes had been laid waste. Experience proves that most men like Gerard, rejected by one woman, are very open to any tenderness from another; and that the victims of Vesuvius and of Etna return to the scene of their ruin, there to rebuild their dwellings.

And Gerard was not a man of feelings and affections *only*: he was a man of mind, of thought—of cultivated, rich, and powerful mind—of deep and original thought. Our favourite living poet beautifully describes the dawn of love on the mind of an idiot boy, in those fine lines—

“The heart, in waking, woke the mind;”

and, certainly, heart and mind do, in a powerful and wonderful manner, act and re-act upon each other.

But yet the breaking of a heart has often been the making of a mind: driven from the sweet shelter of happy love, man seeks refuge from memory in labour, and quits, like Adam of old, the rosy bowers of Eden, to reap with the sweat of brain, if not of brow, the laurels of renown, the flowers of poesy, the fruits of science and of art. Happy love has made many a vain

idler—disappointed love many a hero—many a poet!
 We owe our Byron to Mary Chaworth's preference of
 Jack Musters, and despair became to him an inspiration
 and a muse.

"He fed on poisons, and they were to him
 A kind of nutriment."

And such they are to all!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SECOND LOVE.

THE next morning at breakfast a letter from Oxford was put into Rosalie's trembling hand. Her affected *nonchalance* at receiving, and her coy delay in opening it, could not conceal from her mother the lively emotion its arrival excited, and which betrayed itself by the sudden pallor that overspread her roseate complexion, and the tears that sparkled in her eyes. Jeannetta, who expected the count, was as usual looking from the balcony up the street, and Miss Jenny was revelling in that noble vindication of woman's moral and intellectual powers, "Woman and her Master." Mrs. Orde alone watched with deep, though secret emotion, the confirmation of all her suspicions, and feeling for the restraint which she perceived that Rosalie was putting on her anxiety, she said, with assumed unconcern,—

"I think, my love, I recognise poor Gerard's hand. If no one else feels any interest in our old friend, I do; so pray let us see how he bears all his honours, and whether, now he is eminent, he is still affectionate."

"Read his letter aloud, dear mamma," said Rosalie, afraid her trembling voice should betray the secret of her heart.

What pains we all take, and how vainly too, to conceal that we have been silly enough to let a pleasant, quiet lodging in our heart, to that captivating impostor, love, to whom one has to give up the whole tenement, with all its furniture—who requires constant attendance, unlimited credit, and pays us back with the false coin of

Judas's kisses, crocodile tears, false smiles, and refuses to make good anything he has broken, though the list include promises innumerable, scores of vows, dozens of oaths, and that invaluable article which can never be repaired, a female heart of the antique mould, and therefore a priceless gem !

Mrs. Orde read :—

“ MY DEAR KIND ROSALIE,—I know you will wish me joy, and so will our mutual mamma and great aunt—Jeannetta, too, if she can snatch one moment from love to bestow upon affection. You have heard, perhaps, that I have got a double first, the Latin essay, and, what you, Rosy, will value more, because you can understand it better, the English prize poem. Now all this and much more, less showy, but of more intrinsic value, I owe to your advice, your sympathy, and the consolatory interest you took in me, when I was a miserable moon-struck boy—something between the ‘moping idiot, and the madman gay.’

“A fortnight hence the commemoration takes place: will you come and witness the triumph you have secured me? How my laurels will bud and bloom beneath your sunny smile. Do come—‘Come one, come all,’—

“ ‘For what avails half life’s success,
No early friend shall see or share !’

“Tell dear Jeannetta, with my brotherly love, that I am so completely cured of my silly and presumptuous impertinence, that I shall be delighted to see the count, and shall love him for her sake! I hope dear Miss Jenny will be of the party; she will find woman greatly in the ascendant in these classic haunts—and the best hit in my poem is a tribute to the sex, which I expect will bring me rounds of applause from the men, smiles from the fair, and one approving nod from Miss Jenny. My beloved father will be here, and if you will all come, my joy will be quite boyish; it is so at the very thought. A line by return to say yes; I shall spend the interval in preparations to make you all happy, and to do you all honour. Allow me to make a profound bow to aunt

Jenny, to kiss the rosy cheek of my kind mamma Orde, and your fair hands, my early playmates, and my sisters by adoption! What a lion I shall be if the belles of the *Morning Post* and the *Court Journal* are seen on my arm! Yours, sweet Rosalie, while I am

“GERARD ESDAILE.”

“Bravo!” cried Mrs. Orde; “he is cured indeed; and I declare, his brilliant success and evident happiness take a great load from my heart. I have often felt very uneasy about him, since his bitter disappointment in his first love.”

“A disappointment that would have broken woman’s faithful heart, or, at least, have poisoned her life,” said Miss Jenny, bridling; “but mon is a creature quite incapable o’ sae sooblime a virtue as constancy! A puir, frail, feeble being, without energy to be vary good, or vary bod, and na sooner aff wi’ the auld luvie, than the twa-legged shottlecock is on wi’ the new!”

“I do not at all agree with you, aunt,” said Rosalie, reddening; “at least as far as Gerard is concerned; and I am quite sure that, had his first attachment been returned, his devotion to its object would have been as lasting as it would have been entire. But he would, in my opinion, be a weak fool indeed, to waste all the warm affections of his young and impassioned heart on one who not only scorned him, but so openly encouraged another.”

“I never thought there was much depth in Gerard’s character,” said Jeannetta, a little piqued at finding herself so easily resigned and so soon forgotten. “He may have very quick feelings—I dare say he has; but he is not capable, I am certain, of any deep devotion to any one.”

“Well, at any rate,” said Mrs. Orde, “he has proved that his intellect is of the highest order, whatever his heart may be, and I, with Rosalie, think that heart one of the noblest, truest, and best, that ever beat in a human breast; but be that as it may, all must agree in a feeling of triumph at his success, and of gratification at, in spite of all that has occurred to estrange him, till clings to his second mamma, and his adopted

sisters, as he always called us, and, you see, calls us still. I think you, none of you, not even aunt Jenny herself, can dream of refusing his modest and affectionate entreaty, that we will witness his triumph."

"I've na' the least objection," said Miss Jenny, "to encourage, by my ain individual presence, the young mon, wha is meritorious eno' (always conseederin' that he is but a mon after a'); and, indeed, I luke upon his success at Oxford, as an indirect and (I doot na') a most unintentional compliment to the intellectooal and moral influence o' my ain sex. What, I ask you a', would Gerard Esdaile be the day, if when it pleased God to remove his ain gifted and excellent mither (dootless because the auld bukeworm, Dr. Esdaile, wi' a' his learning, kenned na how to appreciate her superiority)—what, I say, would that neglected male bairn ha' been, body and soul, if you, niece, had na' tended his then weakly frame, if I had na' forteefied his then feeble mind, and if my dear grond-nieces had na', by admeeting him to constant companionsheep in their studies and their pastimes, geevin to the pedantic education his father bestowed on him the refinement, the polish, and I may add, the humanity, no mon educated by mon alane can ever boast? If Coleridge has said sae wisely, that there is a'ways something femineene—not effeminate, mark me, lassies!—in a mon o' ganius; if Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, the most perfect creations of whose motchless pen are his Ione, his blind floower-girl, his Pauline, his Louise de La Vallière, and mony ither o' my sex, has said that a mon o' ganius is ever mair at hame wi' women than wi' men; if Johnson, Cowper, Rousseau, and a' the most eminent amang men own thot a gifted mither is mon's best guide, instructor, companion; if Milton's Eve was his maist finished creation, as it dootless was his Great Master's too; and if Shakspeare's sel' owes half his immortality to the joostice he daured, even in the dark ages of mon's tyranny, and woman's moral and intellectooal thraldom, to do to female merit and influence, I think it would not have misbecome Gerard Esdaile, in the hour of success, to own wha first by a mither's care strengthened his frail body, which else had been a drawback to the exertions o' his mind; wha first

gave him habits of order, self-discipline, application, and emulation; wha first taught him to luv the poesy, wha noo rewards him with her inspeerations, and wha first impressed on his young mind the grond moxim of a success—'Concentrate! condense! aspeere! Weel begun is half dune'—'And he wha would reach the mark at a', must aim at the centre o' the target.' My ain opeenion is, that Gerard would na' boast the prize poem the day, had I not made him as a bairn get up by heart, without meesing ain word, my ain grond epic poem ca'd 'Woman, Heaven's best work,' and my didoctic piece on 'Mon's mental and moral deficiency!'"

It is too much to assert, that any one present listened very attentively to Miss Jenny's long and enthusiastic harangue; but that might be owing to the fact that all present had frequently heard the greater part of it before.

At the close of her speech the count arrived; and his young affianced, as their hands and eyes met, forgot the world contained any other. Mrs. Orde, however, seeing in Rosalie's flushed cheek and anxious eye the impatience of her heart, soon extracted from both a joyful promise to accompany her to the commemoration. Every new scene is so bewitching in the prospect of enjoying it with the loved one! The halls grey with time, the groves green with spring, the classic Isis, and the cloistered haunts—how did Jeannetta long to behold them, hand in hand with him, and how did he whisper in her ear, that with her for his Eve, every place was an Eden! It was settled, then, that the whole party should accept of Gerard's invitation, and on Rosalie devolved the delightful task of writing to him to announce an arrangement which promised him so much pride and joy.

CHAPTER XL.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

LET us leave hot and crowded London for awhile, though the season is still at its giddy height, and though wealth and fashion have brought in their train every luxury of

nature and of art, that their magic power can bring. And what can they not? we are tempted to ask, as we gaze on matchless fruits and flowers that seem never so fresh and fair as in the very centre of thousands of habitations and millions of squalid inhabitants; where in the sultriest weather the sons of luxury have ice at will to cool their sparkling draughts and luscious dainties; where parks and gardens of verdure, through which bright streams glide, woo the hot and weary feet of themselves and their steeds—what can we seek out of London, that London itself does not yield, at least to all the children of Dives?

We seek what London can never boast—the pure breeze fresh from “the wild and open sea,” the stillness unbroken save by the silver ripple or the majestic dash of waters against those white cliffs. We seek, too, the skies unblackened by smoke, and that gentle elasticity of spirit and of frame which Father Ocean bestows, in some measure, even on the pilgrims to his shrines, and which he lavishes on his peculiar children whose home is on his bosom; so that no dangers daunt, no difficulties sadden, no dejection bows them; and firmest in faith, brightest in hope, strongest in endurance, and bravest in spirit, are those sons of Old Ocean, the seamen of our isle!

To Brighton then we summon thee, dear reader, while busy milliners and mantua-makers prepare Jeannetta's *trousseau*; and while Rosalie and Gerard Esdaile make, out of the approaching visit to Oxford, an excuse for the daily exchange of letters crossed and re-crossed.

We would fain know if still by the wild sea Violet broods on love. If she has yet discovered that the idol is clay; or if, in the passionate worship of her young heart, she still invests her Pevensy with all the god-like attributes a loving maiden's fancy bestows on some fascinating and beguiling idler, who, so far from being the pure and noble and honourable being she creates and worships, has long ago lost “the whiteness of his soul”—would secretly in her presence, and openly in that of many others, scoff at and deride all she thinks so high-minded, and whose notions of honour go no farther than the resisting any wrong or insult offered to him—

self, but do not extend to the protecting from his own vile thoughts, and viler intentions, the woman who believes in and trusts him—the honour that would allow him to make the maiden of his bosom a castaway, yet compel him to seek her brother's blood should he proclaim him what he is.

Colonel Pevensey did not covet the young Violet's adoration. He knew he was not what she deemed him. He knew that if once she beheld him cold, worldly, and commonplace, her love and all its wild delusions would vanish. He found her devotion passionate, exacting, often inconvenient; to love her without an object or an end he despised as boyish folly; to seduce her, he, knowing too well what seduction was to woman, he thought, as he told Symons, with a shrug, would be hardly fair, nothing more; but to marry her, he pronounced (and in this Symons warmly agreed), would be a madness, an absurdity, which none but a lunatic could dream of, and none but a fool perpetrate.

And yet, in spite of all this, the natural vanity of man induced him to keep up her illusions. He did sometimes seek to avoid her, but never to disenchant her, just as the heroines of the old romances (ay, and the new ones too), however much they may suffer from the redundancy of their conquests and the pertinacity of their adorers, never, among all their devices for ridding themselves of unwelcome suitors, adopt any which can make them appear less lovely or less amiable. That "worst of disenchantments, a morning wrapper," as Sir Edward calls it, and those greater abominations still, a set of curl-papers, have never been adopted yet by the Clarissas and Pamelas of romance or of reality; nor do their attempts to disenchant even go so far with their adorers as one angular or ungraceful attitude, one loud or shrill ejaculation, one virago look or word,—such as, perhaps, has driven a poor maid that very day to give her warning. No, while refusing a hand, they still wished to retain a heart, and while crushing his hopes to increase his admiration; and much on the same principle did Colonel Pevensey act with Violet. Every sentiment he uttered in her presence was pure and chaste; every thought he breathed noble and refined; his very glance

had a winning timidity in its tenderness (for he *did* love her a little, and admired her beyond expression); and the manners of this haughty man unbent for her with a chivalrous gentleness and a deferential softness, which few of the high-born beauties of the world had ever elicited from him.

All this was partly, perhaps, to keep alive her flattering, though troublesome devotion, but partly too the reflection of her own exquisite purity of thought and dignity of character; for as the meanest brooks look silver in the light of the moon, and the commonest scenes seem purified and etherealized as they reflect her smiles, so, almost unconsciously to himself, Colonel Pevensey's thoughts, looks, and manners took the tone of Violet's, and he forgot in her presence all his vile experience of men, and, alas! of women too. And it was only some sly inuendo, or mischievous though flattering jest of Symons's, that reminded him that *he* was a man of rank, of pleasure, and of the world, and she a fond girl, inexperienced, devoted, and far, far beneath him in station.

When last we left them, Violet was in all the rapturous expectation of his first letter. He had evaded a meeting, and had half unconsciously promised to write to her—to write to her!—what magic to her in the poor subterfuge, contrived in order to convey the cold counsels of an unloving but yet friendly and prudent nature, without witnessing the anguish he instinctively felt they would produce; and all night long, Violet's waking and sleeping thoughts were centred on this letter, and while he dismissed it from his mind, as a nuisance and a bore to be briefly dispatched on the morrow, she figured him to herself in his lone chamber, his midnight lamp shining on his noble head, his thoughtful brow, and tearful eyes, and lighting him, as his graceful hand vainly tried to keep pace with the wild outpourings of his impassioned heart.

How should she dare to open, how quiet her heart and nerves to peruse, the first love-letter of her adored one! Oh, how she blessed him in her fervent prayers—how she wept over the expected confession of a love such as her own heart gloried in!

Poor, poor Violet! what letter, penned by mortal man, would not have seemed cold to thy expectancy! Oh, if there were some magic mirror in which woman, worn out with the worship of the idol of her own creation, could see that idol as he is, and while *she* kneels, and watches, and prays, could behold him "flown with insolence and wine," scoffing with fellow-sneerers at love and faith, or poisoning the air with the nauseous smoke of a stupefying weed, or exchanging the light glance and flippant jest with some saucy *soubrette*, or sleeping, after his soulless carouse, in dull forgetfulness of her and all her love, would she rob the Creator of his due, to lavish her adoration on the creature—would not nights of vigils and days of passionate absorption seem madness, folly, even to herself—and would not pale cheeks and weeping eyes, and broken hearts, and bewildered brains be no more, in most cases, could the real once take the place of the ideal, and the scales fall from the eyes of woman's love?

CHAPTER XLI.

THE LETTER.

VIOLET rose early—very early, for she could not rest, and she wished to be ready to receive the treasure, which, as she imagined Colonel Pevensey had spent the night in inditing, she believed he would dispatch as soon as his servant was astir, and that he could imagine that in her little lodging any one would be about.

When, however, she opened her window, and saw that what she had mistaken for dawn was only starlight, and when she heard a neighbouring clock strike four, she felt convinced she had yet several hours to wait, and thinking that if she could but sleep they would pass more rapidly, she threw herself, in her wrapper, and with her unbound hair hanging about her shoulders, on the sofa in her little sitting-room, and nature, exhausted by her passionate vigil, threw her into a deep and trance-like sleep. As she did not ring her bell, and as the wretched maid-of-all-work of her lodgings generally depended on that bell

to wake her to a day of toil and discomfort, Violet slept far beyond her usual hour, and though the morning sun stole in and fell on all around her, lighting up at once her fair and fresh beauty and the squalid poverty of her little room. It must have awaked her, had not her head been drooping from the cushion, and her face been half buried in her arms; but the rays seemed to illumine the golden ripples of her hair, the alabaster of her rounded throat, her gently heaving bosom, and the white folds of the wrapper which took every undulation of her nymph-like form, and left her little white foot, with its high instep and delicate ankle bare, but for a crimson velvet slipper belonging to some stage costume she had to adopt, but which added a singular and exquisite effect to the striking picture she presented on that wretched little couch—a couch which a huckster's wife would have disdained, yet on which reposed a beauty that might have won a throne, and a grace, a genius, and a virtue that deserved, and would have retained, what that beauty had won.

Colonel Pevensey too awoke early: he always did—his habits were a singular mixture of the soldier's and the sybarite's. His first recollection on waking was, that he had something painful to do—his second, that the sooner it was done the better; and so he took his warm bath, and, with a soldier's promptitude, performed a sybarite's toilet, threw his Turkish brocaded wrapper around him, thrust his feet into slippers lined with ermine, and embroidered in gold and pearls, and garnets, by a duchess's hand, and entering the boudoir adjoining his bath, threw himself into the easiest of easy-chairs, and rang at once for Symons, his chocolate, and his desk.

Symons, who had returned the night before, sent him word, on a scrap of paper, that he would breakfast with him in half-an-hour, and while a tempting *déjeuner* was spread, the colonel sipped his chocolate, and began the letter which Violet had so longed, so watched, so prayed for.

It ran thus:—

“MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—Forgive me if the words which prudence, friendship, and real regard for your

interest dictates, seem cold to the youthful fancy and impassioned heart of the loveliest and most enthusiastic of her sex. The discovery of last night took even my heart by surprise, sweet Violet; and gratified vanity and excited passion, united, I fear, to extort from me words of love, which the very tenderness with which you have inspired me makes me eager to obliterate, or to withdraw.

"If I loved, esteemed, admired, nay, revered you less, Violet, I should seem to love you more.

"But no, all worldly-minded and commonplace as I fear my notions are in most cases, I cannot take advantage of a simplicity so touching, a love so devoted, and a purity so unsuspecting as yours.

"You love me, Violet! and as I dwell on that bewitching and bewildering conviction, and unite it in my vain and passionate heart with the exquisite beauty, the bright intelligence, and the virgin softness of Violet, the man rises in my bosom, burns in my veins, and almost impels me to seek you—to hide my scorching tears in your bosom, and to bear you away—far away—the brightest sacrifice virtue ever made to love; but even at the thought, experience lays her cold hand on my heart, and I look through the vista of years, and I see—what God grant may never be realized, at least through me, and I feel as if, for many reasons, it cannot through another, and as if no other should work that common tragedy, and live! And then, Violet, whatever of goodness and purity my mother bequeathed to me (for I hold that all such gifts come to us from woman), and whatever of integrity and true courage I have inherited from my father, and whatever of bright and good the vile world has left me, all rise in my bosom to cry shame on the delusions of passion, and to bid me, as a man, a gentleman, a Pevensy, protect you, angel child! from—myself!

"Do not judge lightly of this sacrifice. You would not, if you knew how I worship a beauty which realizes my *beau-idéal*, and how much to me genius and virtue like yours enhance the power and the witchery of that beauty. We must part, sweet child—or rather we must never meet! My heart grows sad, and yet proud too, as it prophesies the future that awaits you, if—forgive the

seeming vanity implied in the assumption of such power—if I save you, dearest innocent, at this crisis, from yourself, and from me!

“You will weep, and you will not easily forget me; but your tears, unstained by degradation, and unscorched by remorse, will leave no trace upon your cheek.

“Your genius will win you the topmost place in your profession; your beauty will secure you a coronet, and, better still, the love of some heart of which you will be the first and only idol, and the entire devotion of some man higher, perhaps, in actual rank—richer in this world’s blessings—nobler in thought, but without those peculiar and perhaps eccentric notions, and those engrossing and mystic paternal ties which compel me to say farewell, and forbid me to aspire to any title but that of the truest and most trustworthy of your friends,

“HARCOURT PEVENSEY.”

It certainly was not without some emotion that Colonel Pevensey indited this letter. The water sparkled in his eyes, for we are all ready to weep at our own heroism, our own virtues, however imaginary. He thought he was rejecting a sacrifice which a worse man would have gloried in. He dreamt not that it was a sacrifice which Violet would have died rather than make; and that though living alone, and an actress, and intelligent so far beyond her years, she had been brought up in such ignorance of evil, and was so entirely without experience of the world and its ways, that though she had wept over stories of man’s treachery and woman’s shame, it never occurred to her to degrade herself and him she adored, by any thought of vice in him or frailty in her. The chances of life and the accident of a few months back had made Violet an actress; but she had gone through none of the gradations or degradations which generally precede a *début* and a success in the highest branch of her profession; she had not learnt the *finesse* of acting from any intimacy with actors and actresses—she had never frequented the green-room or the sides-cenes—she was no *protégée* of any king of the drama, first teaching her, perhaps, with well-practised art, to feel love, passion, jealousy, self-abandonment, and

despair; and then, from her own sad experience, to realize in other characters what she had felt in her own.

Violet, when she went upon the stage first, had never loved—had never had any instruction but from her reserved and respectable aunt.

The power of loving, and loving with her whole soul, lay slumbering in her heart; but the success of her Juliet—a success which on the London boards would have equalled Fanny Kemble's or Miss O'Neil's—arose from that power peculiar to impassioned natures and imaginative temperaments—the power of identifying herself completely and entirely with the object of her sympathy; and the imaginary Juliet, actually, for the time being, felt the sudden growth in her own heart of passionate love for an imaginary Romeo: not the commonplace ranter of rouge and chalk, who performed the part, but some vision of her girlish fancy, of whose wild and enchanting poetry, that spangled and buskined puppet was the interpreter.

So exquisite was her sensibility, and so powerful her imagination, that she could realize to herself both the love and the lover; and as poor L. E. L. said when first she saw the sea, about which she had written so exquisitely before seeing it, that she should never have said so much had she seen it first—so there was in Violet's personation of Juliet in love—Violet, who had never loved herself—an exquisite, an inspired, an almost angelic tenderness and purity which earthly love seldom exhibits, and which even Violet herself never portrayed with the same inspiration, after her own heart had yielded itself to earthly passion, and experience of unhappy love had robbed her conception of Juliet of half its glad and fluttering ecstasy; and her words of tenderness were saddened in tone, and her looks of unutterable fondness dimmed somewhat by droppings from that fountain of tears which love unlocks in every woman's heart, and draws from, alas! so largely and so often.

Violet then, as we have said, though an actress in public, and a poor unprotected girl, living alone in a mean lodging in private, was as innocent, nay, as ignorant of evil and of this world, as when she played, a happy child, in the weed-grown and tangled thickets of the

once fair shrubberies of the old manor-house at home, or pored over her worm-eaten Shakspeare, in the broken bowers, or by the antique hearth of the squire's ancestral and half-ruined abode.

She had loved Colonel Pevensey with all the fervour of a girl of an impassioned nature and poetical temperament, in love for the first time, and in love, too, with the handsomest, the most dignified, stately, and (when he chose it) bewitching man of his day—a man endowed with that sort of proud and protecting gentleness, that chivalrous courtesy and almost condescending and half-melancholy sweetness, which awes while it wins, works upon woman's fancy with the idea of so much more feeling than is betrayed, and makes her look up (as to a being of a higher order) to the very man whom, uniting so strangely dignity and dejection, she worships as an idol, and yet longs to comfort and hang over, and minister to as a child.

She loved, and gave up her whole heart to the new and delicious rapture of loving: the natural timidity of a young girl's love made her seek concealment, while the gushing enthusiasm of her tenderness compelled her to pour out her heart in those letters which Colonel Pevensey had attributed to Jeannetta, but in which the more wily and perhaps acute Symons detected a genius and a poetry which he felt no woman of his acquaintance possessed, except the young and friendless actress, whose *début* he had witnessed, and whom he loved from that hour with an evil, calculating, but intense passion, to which he had inwardly sworn to sacrifice everything—but himself.

He certainly had not calculated on such an obstacle as Violet's passionate predilection for Colonel Pevensey; but if anything would have added to his selfish and unscrupulous desire to possess Violet, it would have been the delight of triumphing over such a rival—a man he hated, as a bad parasite always hates the patron to whom he clings, and against whom Symons, in his mean pride, bore many and many a grudge, and to whose natural envy and malice, jealousy now added a new and poisoned sting.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE POOR COUSIN.

SYMONS found his colonel reclining in his "slippered ease," with an expression of countenance, in which recent emotion was fast giving way to present self-complacency. He was pleased with himself, for what he regarded as an act of heroic self-denial, and he flattered himself, that he had conveyed his renunciation of poor Violet's love, in language calculated to raise him in her estimation, and add, at once, to her love and her regret.

He had got over his dislike to discussing Jeannetta's refusal with Symons, for he felt, what he instinctively knew, that Symons, and all other men of taste, would feel too, far more proud of the love of so rarely-gifted a girl as Violet, than of that of any other well-born, beautiful, and accomplished, but comparatively commonplace young lady, like Jeannetta Orde.

And this was the triumph of genius, and of that exquisite grace, and diffusive sensibility, which generally accompanies that rarest of gifts. Miss Orde was more brilliantly beautiful than Violet, and had fortune, station, and all the advantages they give; and yet Colonel Pevensey's heart beat with a melancholy triumph, at the idea that Violet loved him, while the thought of Jeannetta's devotion had only excited a tender pity and a grateful softness; and Symons's bosom burned with jealous anguish as the colonel read him his letter to Violet, while he would only have inly sneered his contempt, and openly smiled his congratulations, had the colonel confided to him the conquest of any other woman, or women, in the world, however lofty in rank, or eminent for beauty.

"I do not see that I can say more than that, Symons," said Colonel Pevensey, wiping a tear from his eyes; "if, after that, she will throw herself in my way, on her own beautiful head be the sin and shame, if such it be, that must follow. I think I am doing more than one man in a million could or would do in such a case; but what-

ever the sweet child may think, I am no angel; and even now, if you are not quickly off with my letter, I shall be tempted to throw it into the fire, fling all my virtuous resolutions to the dogs, and rushing to the darling girl, give way to this bewildering impulse, and call it destiny—fate—or what they will!”

“As she would doubtless do too,” sneered Symons.

“‘For when weak women go astray,
Their stars are more in fault than they.’”

“You don’t seem satisfied, Symons: is there anything else I can say, think you?”

“Well, since you ask me, colonel, I think, if you really wish to save the girl, it is a pity you have written in a manner calculated to increase her silly passion to the wildest pitch, to inflame her fond imagination, and make her think no sacrifice would be too great for a being so sublimely heroic, and so bewitchingly tender. I only know, if I were a woman in love with you, and you wrote me such a letter, it should be ‘all for love, and the world well lost,’ with me; and in five minutes I would be here!”

“There is something, certainly, in what you say, Symons, but I do not see how I can, as a gentleman and a man of feeling, write harshly to a poor child of Violet’s sensibility—one too, whose only fault is the loving me too well.”

“Nay, colonel, I never dreamt of your writing *harshly* to her, but if you had not made yourself appear so loveable, while withdrawing as a lover, and so spared the girl’s *amour-propre*, while, in fact, casting her away for ever, I think you would have carried out your praiseworthy object better; as it is, I own, I doubt whether you will not rather accelerate and ensure the catastrophe you wish to prevent.”

“Well, I am quite unequal to the task you would impose on me, Symons; I wish to be a friend to the poor girl, not a brute: if you think that letter will do no good I’ll destroy it, and call and see her. I wish you would take it, for in the first place, as I expect it will affect her deeply, I should not like common eyes to witness her emotion, and in the next I think you might

slip in a few words of flattery and comfort, and, perhaps, prevent her giving way to despair. Tell her I am quite as miserable as she is; that haughty relatives influence my actions; that I cannot offend them for the sake of my little ones; say anything that can a little mitigate the first blow, and that shock well over, she will not be driven to any act of desperation. Every hour that passes after some dreadful disappointment, silently and almost unconsciously to ourselves, reconciles us to our fate."

"Well, colonel, there is nothing I would not do to oblige you, though of all visitors the most unwelcome must be one who goes to announce to a woman the loss of all that made life lovely, and of all painful sights a beautiful woman in despair is the most so!"

"Thank you, Symons; I never for a moment doubted your zeal. Watch her every word, look, and tone—tell me how she bears it—after all, perhaps, it won't do. If you think it likely to break her heart, or bewilder her fine intellect, I must give in—things must take their chance, and love must still be lord of all. I will sacrifice anything but her own health and reason; for really I do believe I am more fond of the girl than I was aware of."

Sacrifice everything! Oh, how light and how selfish is the love of the man of pleasure and of the world! He never dreamt—even if her love proved deep enough to destroy life or reason—he never dreamt of offering to make her, who so loved him, the wife of his bosom—no, he could contemplate sacrificing her name and fame, her honour in this world, and her hopes of a better, to his own aristocratic notions; but to sacrifice one jot of pride, or one iota of prejudice, that was so completely out of the question, that it never even occurred to him.

And so Symons took the letter after a plausible assurance to the colonel, that though he did not profess to be immaculate, or better than other men, yet he was glad to have a hand in this good work; and that he should lay his head on his pillow with a happy conscience, if he could be, however humbly, instrumental in saving for the profession she adorned, and ultimately for some noble and wealthy suitor, the pretty and clever creature, whose

devotion to his colonel gave her an interest and a charm in his eyes.

"I do not wonder she loves you, colonel," he said, while tears of plausibility filled his prominent, light grey eyes; "but in order to complete this noble sacrifice, and save her, you must not see her, you must keep out of the way, and not take the alarm too easily; hearts do not break now-a-days, and she is too well principled to think of suicide. So *au revoir*, dear colonel—depend on me!"

With a beating heart and a stealthy step, but a step winged by jealousy, ardent love, and new-born hope, Symons quickly traversed the road that divided him from Violet's lodging, and finding the street-door open and no one in the way, he hurried stealthily up the stairs to the little sitting-room, where he expected to find her.

The door of the room was ajar, and pushing it gently open, he stood on the threshold, and remained for some time, gazing in mute ecstasy on the figure of Violet, reclining, as we have described her, on the little old couch, on which she still slept.

He had never been fully aware before of the delicate beauty of her head and face, and the Medicean perfection of her form. He sank into a chair near the door, to enjoy, at his ease, a picture so entrancing to any one, but to a passionate lover, hitherto unnoticed and disregarded, so bewildering. On a little table, close to the chair he occupied, were drawing materials, and Symons, who had some skill as a draughtsman, intended to sketch the reclining figure of Violet, as a study for a sleeping Psyche; but just as he had seized a pencil, and opened a scrap-book on the table, a letter, in a manly hand, unfolded between the leaves, attracted his attention.

It ran thus:—

"Do not despise me, Violet, that I have become a miserable private, in the very regiment of which the colonel is, I hear, one of your worshippers, and all the officers, more or less, your admirers: it is love, bewildering love for you, that has sunk me thus!

"Maddened by your departure, I quarrelled with my brother, who adores you too, after his own gloomy and desponding fashion; I left my home, my father, my

mother, resolved never to give up the search for Violet, while my wretched frame could drag itself after my restless and most miserable spirit—the tempter found me perishing of want. I sold my birthright for a mess of pottage—in other words, I enlisted—and now I find myself at the beck and call of those far less gentle of blood, and refined in thought and feeling, than myself; the associate, too, daily and nightly, of the profligate, the low, the vulgar. Constant restraint is now the portion of one, who ever till now roamed free as air; and ceaseless and degrading drudgery the fate of him whose sole occupations have hitherto been sports he delighted in, studies that enchanted him, and the exquisite and passionate joy of loving you.

“How am I to live and bear it? I cannot desert—never will I bring so foul a blot on my unstained and ancient name; even if my poor father knew of my misery and would buy me off, he has not the means; and I cannot bear to destroy his peace and my mother’s, by telling him to what my mad devotion and headstrong passion has brought me.

“My life is intolerable, and one of its greatest curses is, the hearing profane and ribald lips name thy name, my Violet.

“They couple thee—and, oh! so as to make my blood boil, and the spirit of Cain rise in my heart—with the gay and handsome colonel of my regiment—a man, they say, who never lets ‘I dare not, wait upon I will. But let him pause; he does not survive thy fall, my cousin, my adopted sister, my adored one! Again I hear, and with a deeper shame, that one Symons, a man beneath thee every way—mean in birth, in person, in talents, and in character, but a sycophant of our colonel’s, and a pander to his vices, has sworn thou shalt be upon his own vile terms. Thou his paramour! angel of purity! maiden in whose veins flows the blood of hundreds of generations of those who were lords of that soil, of which this miscreant was, I dare be sworn, a serf! He who would, but for the accidents of life, be far too much beneath thee, to dream of thee as his wife—he, I hear, boasts thou shalt be his mistress yet; and this small miscreant, whom I long to fling to the ground and crush, the discipline of

my odious profession compels me to bow to, to bend before, to obey! Often, at his insolent command, the hot blood rises to my brow, and my hand burns to fell him where he stands; and what then, Violet? nothing but death—death! I covet, I woo her as a bride—but oh! the thought of my father's bowed head, and my mother's broken heart—this thought brings me to myself, and I endure all. And I will endure all, sweet Violet, if you will send me one word of comfort, of affection, of hope. Remember, fallen as I am, I am your cousin; and as I have lived only for you, so for you would I gladly die. These men who pour their poisonous flatteries in your ear, have they loved you as I have done? would they bear for you what I bear? No, Violet; their object is to lower you, to trample on you: mine to rise even from my present mean estate, only to live or die at your feet, sole idol of my heart! Once more, shun Colonel Pevensey; but shun more still his mean parasite, the false-hearted Symons. I want to see you, if only for an hour to consult with you on my present disgraced and miserable position, and ascertain what you wish me to do. When shall I see you? One word,—and let it be a kind one, for misery has made me desparate!

“Your wretched cousin,

“VALENTINE WOODVILLE.”

With bitter and vindictive feelings Symons perused this letter, and inwardly he vowed to revenge himself, sooner or later, on the miserable writer who had already perhaps succeeded in prejudicing Violet against him—he who so wished to appear in her eyes as noble, gentle, and unselfish, and to shine a brilliant contrast to the heartless and calculating object of her passionate and misplaced affection.

As he pondered these things with his brows knit, his hands clenched, and his teeth set, a loud street organ suddenly set up a shrill “Herz mein herz,” and Violet awoke with a wild scream, pushed back her hair, gazed distractedly about her, and seeing baptain Symons, drew her wrapper around her, seated herself with dignity on the sofa, and asked him with some *hauteur*, which her trembling voice and changing colour belied, what he

wanted of her, and what brought him, unannounced, at that hour, into her apartment.

"I will soon alter that cold tone, and that proud look!" thought Symons, with a mean delight in the agony he was about to cause her; but he only smiled deferentially, and said: "I grieve to find myself unwelcome, Miss Woodhurst, but I meant not to intrude upon your solitude, or provoke your gentle spirit to anger and rebuke. I came here by Colonel Pevensey's desire, as his friend, and more still—" here his voice faltered, and he turned away his head—"by my own desire as yours!"

As he spoke, taking out, as he did so, Colonel Pevensey's letter, every particle of colour forsook poor Violet's face—her white lips quivered, her frame trembled violently. She took the letter he offered, and said:—

"Thank you, I will peruse it at my leisure."

"I believe it is part of my duty, Miss Woodhurst, to remain here while you read it, to explain anything you may not quite understand, and to convey your answer at once to Colonel Pevensey—"

"I think I must ask you to absent yourself, sir," said Violet, timidly, "while I make a toilet more suitable to such an occasion."

"Oh, certainly," said Captain Symons, "I will return in half an hour," he bowed stiffly, and left the room.

He stopped at the bottom of the stairs, and the next minute a shriek and a heavy fall broke on his ear.

Captain Symons rushed back to Violet's room; Colonel Pevensey's letter was open in her hand, and she lay perfectly insensible and corpse-like on the floor.

CHAPTER XLIII.

WOMAN'S REWARD.

It was with an ineffable, but almost trembling rapture, that Symons found himself alone with Violet in his arms. He loved her, and with that passion, which even in the worst natures has an intensity and an exclusive devotion almost sublime.

He called for no assistance, but gently replacing her on the sofa, he hung over her, afraid of a return of consciousness which would compel him to withdraw his enamoured scrutiny. He had never been very near her before, for Violet, always reserved in her manners with men, had, in addition to her natural timid dignity, an instinctive dislike to Symons. He had never succeeded more than once in compelling her to shake hands with him, and then the cold moisture of his tight and protracted grasp haunted her for hours after; till this morning, though he had always thought her beautiful, he had never known how beautiful she was, for she really was like a delicate flower, which the more closely it is examined the more exquisite does it appear.

He now for the first time perceived the silken and glossy texture of her rippled and golden hair, the smoothness and the sheen of her fair skin—

“So clear that you might see the blue veins start,
Bearing, like rivers, their rich offering
To that pure ocean, her devoted heart.”

The filbert shape of the transparent nails of her taper fingers, so fair and thorough-bred, the curve of her white throat—the waist,

“Small by degrees, and beautifully less,”

and the foot which, like that of *Clarissa Harlowe*, was as delicate and white as the hand of any other woman, and which invited the touch almost as does an infant's, with its roseate hue and velvet texture.

Symons could have gazed on her for hours, and every hour have discovered some new charm; and in the gratification of his selfish pleasure, he quite forgot the danger of a syncope so protracted and so entire. His dread was, not that she would awake no more, but that she would awake too soon; and though he abstained from touching with his lips, the long unbound and fragrant tresses which hung over his arm in golden ripples, some spirit that watches over the pure in heart, sent the returning blood suddenly back to Violet's cheek, and with a shudder and a shriek she opened her eyes and met

the prominent, pale blue orbs of Symons with their large lids and white lashes fixed searchingly upon her.

Instinctively she drew her wrapper around her, and raising herself from a recumbent to a sitting posture, said,—“Captain Symons, I know not how or why you are here; but you will oblige me much by immediately withdrawing.”

“I am here, Miss Woodhurst,” said Symons, with a melancholy deference which his great tact taught him would serve him best with her, “I am here, in the humble hope of being of some little use to you, some little comfort. I was leaving the house when I heard a faint shriek and a heavy fall: little as I see you esteem me, I thought you might prefer my attentions, in so delicate a case, to those of strangers, and I have watched you as a brother might have watched a sister—do not look so coldly, so doubtingly on me; from the bottom of a heart, purified by your image, Violet, I pity as much as I reverence you!”

“I do not know, sir, by what right you talk to me of pity,” said poor Violet, drawing herself up, and trying to swallow down the tears that nearly choked her.

“By the right,” said Symons with dignity, “of a devotion so sacred and so pure that you might be as proud to inspire, as I am to feel it.”

“Are you in the confidence of Colonel Pevensey?” timidly asked Violet, blushing deeply.

“I am.”

“Then you know—” sobbed the poor girl, in a passion of tears—“you know—”

“I know that you have made an idol, and have found it clay—I know you have invested with all the romantic attributes of a poetical fancy and a virgin heart, a man, honourable, kind, well-meaning, and to whom I am much attached, but who (forgive me) is so far from being the lofty creation you imagine, that he is incapable even of conceiving what he would call a sublime absurdity! The man to reciprocate and to appreciate such a love as yours, Violet, should be, not a man of pleasure, *blasé* with enjoyment—not a man of the world looking at all things through a worldly medium—not a middle-aged man, twice a widower, who has exhausted, in a thousand

firtations, *liaisons*, intrigues, and *affaires de cœur*, the small power of loving with which nature had endowed him, when she gave him a form and face, a voice and manner, so irresistibly captivating to all womankind, that even in the autumn of his charms all women, from the duchess down to the *grisette*, throw away their affections upon him; and to my certain knowledge, the rejecting of advances, the crushing of hopes, and the evading of attentions, takes up a great part of his time, and often embitters his temper."

Nothing could sting poor Violet more sharply, or mortify her more completely than this artful and bitter speech, intended not only to strip the object of her adoration of all the attributes that could excuse, in her own eyes, the devotion she had lavished on him, but, by classing her and her attachment with a host of others, importunate and wearying in the extreme, making the first passionate love of an unselfish heart assume, to her own eyes, the air of a commonplace impertinence, which its idolized object considered a nuisance and a bore.

He knew full well how rapidly she would connect, in her own mind, Colonel Pevensey's farewell (however speciously worded and eloquently expressed) with the many other advances he had been obliged to discourage, the host of other hopes he was compelled to crush, the other attentions he had found so wearisome. All light left her eyes, all spirit forsook her voice and manner at this sudden degradation, both of her idol and herself.

She was so lost in painful and humiliating reflections that she did not perceive that Symons, hope sparkling in his eyes and flushing his cheeks, as the pale hues of despair stole over her, drew his chair nearer and nearer to her, and at last got possession of her cold and trembling hand. His touch, however, recalled her to herself. She hastily withdrew her hand, and rose with a natural and maiden dignity and resentment which would have touched any heart but Symons's; but as her eyes met his—his in whose searching glance a saucy intelligence was mixed with an admiration so unrestrained as to be almost insulting—she sank again into her seat, and burying her face in her hands, burst into an agony of tears.

No man can stand the passionate tears of a woman he really loves, and Symons, almost unconsciously to himself, threw himself on his knees before Violet, and exclaimed:—

“Weep not! weep not, my lovely, my adored one! or rather weep on a bosom which has been all your own, since the first moment your form gladdened these eyes, and your sweet young voice awoke a heart which had slumbered till then! Rend your virgin fancy, sweetest Violet, from one whose years more than double thine, and whose heart is even older than those years. The young should only love the young, Violet; I should value one kind word, one gentle smile, one look of sympathy, of regard—I dare not say of affection—more than that stately, middle-aged coxcomb would the entire resignation of your whole being to his condescension—his pity.”

“His condescension! his pity!” gasped Violet. “Captain Symons, you degrade yourself, far more than you do Colonel Pevensey or even me, by the heartless and malignant treachery of inuendoes like these. With regard to age, *he is what he is*, and being what he is, I, in spite of all you would imply, believe him to be one for whom a woman might be proud to live, and prouder still to die! There are autumns, Captain Symons, far more brilliant than a cold, cutting spring. If that great and gifted being is indeed in the autumn of his noble life, I only regret it, because, lovely as autumn may be, it is winter’s neighbour, and with winter ends the year. You have sought to humble me because I love, and love in vain; but listen, since you *do* know my sad secret, not, I firmly believe, through *his* betrayal, but through your own matchless guile, you shall know all: I glory in that love, all unreturned, unwelcome, and most unhappy as it is, far, far more than I ever could do, in the most prosperous attachment for any other being of this wretched earth. So kind, so noble, so full of honour and of feeling is the very farewell you have so sought to embitter, while so artfully pretending to soften it, that I am proud of it, and proud of Colonel Pevensey, whose noble spirit breathes in every line. Yes, I feel far less degraded by this withdrawal of his love, than by the offer of yours! and in spite of all you have, with a treachery so wily,

implied against him whose confidence you have gained (you best know how)—so far from lowering him in my esteem, you have lowered none but yourself; and I would rather, were he in poverty or trouble, toil for him day and night, and were he prosperous wear my heart out in prayers to Heaven to keep him so—I would rather worship him unknown, unheeded and apart, and if discovered die at his feet, than sit with you, or any like you, on the throne of the world. Go! You now know all! Go and show to others that bitter smile, that mocking eye. I ask but one boon of you, and that I will enforce—that I see you here no more!”

As Violet spoke with passionate energy and bitter scorn, all the softness and humanity of love left Symons' bosom, and nothing remained but the burning sensation of a passion made up of desire, of jealousy, and of revenge; a deadly fire lighted his eyes, a demoniac sneer curled his lip, over which, as over his cheek, an ashy whiteness stole. For some moments he was silent, his hands nervously closed, and his whole frame trembled so that he feared to trust himself to speak; at length he rose, laughed a light scornful laugh, and said,—

“Miss Woodhurst, there is an old saying, and, like all old sayings, a very true one, that nothing so completely ensures a woman's going to the—deuce, as any attempt to keep her from it. Had I thought of this (as I really wished you well), I should not have dreamt of interposing between you and the fate you are courting. With regard to your abuse of me, I look upon it as the venomous outpouring of the passion of a wrong-headed and disappointed woman; but fear not any further urging on my part of the half-playful suit with which I endeavoured to wile away your thoughts from your unhappy and ill-requited attachment, just as I would give a child sweetmeats to make him give up a penknife; the sweetmeats might do him no good, but the penknife must do him a great deal of harm. However, be tranquil; any little fancy for you, the offspring of pity, which I have expressed this morning, has quite passed away since I have heard you in a manner (forgive me) so unfeminine proclaim your spaniel-like determination to love on, and hope on, come what will; and since with regard to

sitting with me on the throne of the world, you have covered yourself with the ridicule of saying 'no,' before you were asked, I am much mistaken if you would not some day, and that soon, kneel and weep to recall those words (which I shall set in a note-book against you), and kneel and weep in vain! I wish you a very good morning."

So saying, Symons let Violet alone in her anguish. Alone with Pevensey's letter, and the memory of all the bitter things which Symons had said, and which, coupled with the evident desire Colonel Pevensey betrayed to put a barrier between them, drove her alternately into fits of passive dejection and active despair. She sat, poor girl, for hours and hours together, conjuring up with torturing ingenuity every thought that could goad and mortify her; at last, out of the hosts of maddening fancies which seemed to dart through and whirl round her brain, she was conscious of only one—namely, that her love was wearisome and unwelcome to Colonel Pevensey, and that he wished to repulse her as too forward, and avoid her as too fond.

Rapidly she paced up and down her little room, as if she could walk away from this degrading thought. Sometimes she stopped, opened her desk, seized a pen, and began to defend herself and upbraid him; then she tore what she had written, and tried to be calm, to kneel, to pray: but in vain, she could not withdraw her thoughts from the creature, and she felt it was a mockery with a pre-occupied heart to address herself to the Creator. None who have not loved, and been, or thought themselves, for that very love, despised, misunderstood, and avoided, can form to themselves any idea of what Violet suffered in that long and dreadful day.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"PATIENCE," THE MAID-OF-ALL-WORK.

AFTER Symons was gone no one came near poor Violet. Her landlady was ill, and the wretched little maid-of-all-work, accustomed only to enter Violet's room when

rung for, and having now the duties of a nurse added to those of footman, cook, and housemaid, found no time to leave her exacting, discontented, and raving mistress, whose complaint was a sort of delirium tremens, brought on by addiction to the gin-bottle, the great destroyer of the souls and bodies of our humble neighbours. Violet, sick with weeping and fasting, weary with incessant and rapid walking up and down her room, shivering and yet fevered, the window open, though a cold east wind blew into the apartment, the hearth black with the ashes of a former fire, the small room unswept, unarranged, untouched, during the whole day, and looking as desolate and forlorn as its unhappy inmate—Violet felt, by degrees, steal into her mind that wish to die, and be forgotten, which so soon, from passive despair, becomes active desperation, and suggests the first thought of suicide to the mind.

This thought, this dreadful, haunting thought, came to poor Violet's frenzied brain she knew not how, nor whence, nor wherefore; but there it was, now tempting her to rush out, and fling herself, warm and palpitating with life, into the rolling sea, now to dash herself from some giddy height, now to drain some poisoned cup. Every hour the impression that she *must* die grew stronger—every hour the demon of suicide painted life in darker hues, and death in softer tints.

She had no engagement that night at the theatre—had she had one she could not have fulfilled it; at length a light danced under her door, and played on the wall of her room; there was a gentle knock at her door oftentimes repeated. Violet, ashamed of the self-abandonment of her despair and her disordered appearance, smoothed her wild hair and arranged her ruffled dress, and then said, "Come in."

It was Patience, the poor little maid-of-all-work; she had in her hand a tray with a cup of hot tea and a plate of toast nicely made. She was a very small and rather interesting looking girl of sixteen, with a prominent and clever-looking forehead, large melancholy dark eyes, and pretty teeth; but in her appearance was that rare and painful mixture, only seen in maids-of-all-work and factory girls; for while spare diet and hard work had

kept her stature and her form to the size and development of a child's, they had marked her face with hues and hollows of care, of distress, and of thought belonging to advanced age. Her arms were very long, and her fingers knotty and sinewy, like an old woman's.

The habit of nursing and carrying heavy children, while yet a frail child herself, had curved her spine, raised one shoulder, and caused a sort of limp in her gait; her complexion was sodden, and of a greenish hue, and her hair, which, nut-brown and fine, had been her mother's pride and care, in those happy days, long ago, when she had a mother, was cut short, by the order of her harsh and tyrannical mistress; but it would rear itself into many a spiral curl, and was not unbecoming, though wild.

She wore as hort-waisted, short-skirted, old, black, stuff frock; and loving Violet, and knowing her detestation of dirt and untidiness, she had washed her pale face with yellow soap till it shone; brushed her hair, and put on a clean little white apron, which Violet had given her.

She said, "Oh, miss, I began to be afeared you was took'd bad; I thought you was out till I heard you move, and that was two hours ago; but I couldn't stir, till I'd got missus to bed; and she wouldn't go till she'd stupefied herself. I'm afeared, miss, you've overheard her a-cussing and swearing at me like mad, and yet I've been on foot, and waiting on her like a gallow's slave, since four this morning. Well, she's sound at last, thank goodness; and no sooner did she snore, than I slipped away to get my tea—I've had nothing all day—and then, thinking you must be starving, miss, I've given you the best cup, and made you this bit of toast—and now, do take it, miss, do 'ee, for indeed you looks more dead than alive, as white as a sheet, and as cold as a stone. Drink the tea, miss, do; it's good and it's hot, though I says it as shouldn't, seeing I made it. While you sups it, I'll light you a bit of fire, and tidy your room a bit."

"No, no! poor girl," languidly exclaimed Violet. "Think of yourself; your mistress will wake, and then you will get nothing."

"No, no, miss; fair play's a jewel: if she wakes

before I've had my fire and one hour's good sleep, I'll give her warning; one must have the patience of a *Jove* to bear any more rowing and bellowing to-night. Do, miss, drink the tea, and eat the leastest mite of toast, just to hearten you up a bit!"

To oblige the poor girl, Violet tried to obey; while she did so, little Patience cheerily lighted a bright fire, swept up the hearth, closed the windows, drew down blinds and curtains, "tidied," to use her own expression, the little room, drew the sofa to the fire; and gently compelling Violet to lie down on it, she brought a pillow and a quilt from her bed, and laid her to rest, as a mother might a child. She coaxed, implored, and tormented Violet into drinking the tea, and swallowing a little bread; and before long, the warmth of the fire, and the soothing effect of the warm beverage, acted on the wearied mind and frame of Violet, and she sank to sleep.

Patience, thoughtless of herself, continued to "tidy the room," till everything was in order, and till she had changed a den of desolation and discomfort into a neat and cheerful little retreat.

"And now," murmured Patience, "that poor miss is a little comfortable, I'll go and get my own tea, for I'm fit to sink into the hearth!"

Alas! alas! at that moment her wretched mistress, angrily, loudly, and repeatedly rang her bell, and it was some hours before the unhappy, overtaken child could escape again from her horrible taskmistress.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE HEART'S MISGIVINGS.

It was with a haunting anxiety, at which Colonel Pevensey himself was astonished, that he awaited the return of Symons. But Symons, who hated his patron, was always rejoiced when, without exciting any suspicion of ill-will, he could inflict on him any pang, in return for those he constantly endured, from the scorching jealousy,

the gnawing envy, and the hoarded hate, that made his bosom a very den of fiends.

Violet's scorn of himself, and her passionate devotion to Colonel Pevensey—her bitter words, and her disdainful looks, triumphed over the habitual and well-assumed calm of his air and manner; and he felt that nothing but violent and overwhelming exercise, ending in mental and bodily prostration, could enable him to play his part to perfection, in his approaching and inevitable interview with his patron.

One of the colonel's horses was always at Symons's service; and, on this occasion, Symons chose the fleetest and most spirited of his stud. He controlled himself and his impatience, until he was a mile or two out of sight of Brighton, and out of all danger of meeting any of its loungers; and then the daring horseman touched the chesnut satin flank of his impatient steed, with a light stroke of his whip, and the noble creature, whose only wish was to fly across the downs, sped away, with his agitated and excited burden, and bore him along with a velocity, in the physical excitement of which, all sense of the hell within his bosom was lost for a time. When at length Symons presented himself in Colonel Pevensey's drawing-room, all traces of agitation were gone. He had made his wonted careful and gentlemanly toilet, and had re-assumed the habitual half-saucy *nonchalance* of his general manner, a *nonchalance* which only changed into earnest and affectionate deference, in the presence of Colonel Pevensey.

Colonel Pevensey, whose native goodness of heart and fervour of imagination, even the career of a man of pleasure and of fashion had not quite destroyed, had endured all day that sort of restless impatience, which, certainly, is one of the features of incipient love. He thought he had done well and wisely in saving a creature whose conscience he felt to be as sensitive as her affections were ardent, from the peril of her own devotion, and his commonplace love. But sometimes he feared he had acted harshly by a being so gentle; and sometimes he almost regretted that he had trusted to Symons a mission so serious, so delicate, and so dangerous. Symons, the all characters false and hollow in themselves, how-

ever specious and fascinating in appearance, could not stand the test of deliberate reflection and earnest scrutiny; his character certainly did not blossom and thrive in the garden of memory—no hypocrite's does—and again and again Colonel Pevensey groaned, to think he had exposed poor Violet's angelic purity, and passionate idolatry, perhaps, to the unfeeling taunts and sneers of a heartless man; perhaps to a pity and condolence, which might wound, but could not comfort.

"Poor child! poor, dear, adorable girl," he muttered to himself again and again, as he paced up and down his room, "to what have I, perhaps, exposed her, merely for loving me, as, I do believe, I have never, never been loved before: not from a flattered vanity, awakened by my notice—not from any woman's pride in winning one for whose favour so many fools contend—not from one thought of interest, or dream of ambition, but from the first involuntary, uncalculating, absorbing love of a maiden whose brilliant genius invests her idol with every lovely attribute, and whose pure, though passionate heart, makes her love of that idol (alas, of clay) akin to idolatry. And yet what choice had I? we meet on such unequal grounds. I am no boy, to love her as she loves me; content to sit by her side, or *fler le parfait amour* at her feet—a sighing swain, a Damon, or a Corydon, who can live months on a look and years on a sigh. I am not heartless, selfish, worldly enough to make her what perhaps her heavenly confidence in me might render possible—but what would break her heart when she understood her real position. There is but one alternative—to marry her! Oh, madness! folly! How Lady Tunbridge would sneer! How the Duchess of D—— would quiz me! What would Sparkleton say? What a bye-word and a jest should I be at thirty-eight, knowing the world and its women as I do—to be caught, as if I were eighteen, by Cupid and Hymen, and seen pairing off, slinking away, with a girl in her teens, an actress, and a nobody! And then my children—to give my Clarissa and my Marmaduke an actress of seventeen for their mother. How can I tell, now in the first tender dawn of her beauty, what she may become? All very young creatures are graceful and endearing; but who

can tell what changes wealth and position, and ultimately a title, might effect in her? The *parvenue* might peep out! And fancy me wedded to a *parvenue*! My darlings, perhaps, the object of a *parvenue's* jealousy and hate! No, no; it shall never be—it is better as it is."

So saying, and to strengthen his resolves, Colonel Pevensey rang for his children, and tried to forget, while Clarissa twisted his rich hair round her rosy and taper little fingers, and while Marmaduke made him tell stories about soldiers, that perhaps poor Violet was sitting alone, "weeping those tears the broken-hearted weep."

But it would not do—children, the loveliest, the most loving, and the most beloved, may employ the mind, amuse, interest; but they cannot engross the heart, and, least of all, that heart in which passion has begun to awaken any of its exacting, bewildering, and ever-haunting emotions.

Colonel Pevensey thought of Violet's eyes, swimming in tears, as he looked into those, scarcely clearer in their hazel depths, or more seraphic in their child-like tenderness, but, oh! how much happier, in their gentle confidence and peace, than poor, poor Violet's. As he kissed his Clarissa's spotless brow, his thoughts would wander to that seat of high thought and gentle sadness which he had felt glow with delight, and then grow chill with deep emotion, when, more in gallantry than love, he had pressed it with his careless lips. He thought of Violet's sunny and redundant tresses, with their rare and golden ripples, as Clarissa's pretty locks fell on his shoulders; and when he pressed her to his heart, all doting father as he was, he felt there was yet a void there, which none but Violet's Psyche form and passionate tenderness could really fill.

"What are you thinking of, my own papa?" asked sweet Clarissa, with all the lurking jealousy of undivided attention, and the quick and watchful apprehension of her sex. "Why do your beautiful eyes fill with tears, and why are you so pale? And why do you think, and think, and think, and then sigh, and not tell poor Clarissa what you are thinking about, or what you sigh for?"

Colonel Pevensey caught her to his heart, and sighed again.

"Ah, there, you sigh still, and there is another tear in your dear, pretty blue eye. Have I done anything to vex you? I didn't cry, though you haven't sent for me all day—I didn't cry, papa, though my heart was full of tears—because it vexes you to see that I have cried; and though you forgot you had promised to ride with me, I didn't complain, but rode just as you taught me, and as if you were by my side;—and though I have been very unhappy indeed, I have taken such pains, I have got good marks for all I have done, and as I couldn't think of anything else, I have written you a letter, to tell you not to care about me, if there is anything else you want to do, or like to do; and Miss Trevor says it is well written, and no bad fault, except tautology."

"The fault of all who love, my darling," said her father. "Where is the letter?"

Clarissa took from the pocket of her little apron a letter, sealed with three large seals, and directed in round hand, bold and clear:—

"The Honourable Colonel Pevensey,
"18, Brunswick Square,
"Brighton,
"Sussex,
"England."

"Marmaduke sealed and directed it, papa," said Clarissa, blushing at her father's hearty laugh at the outward appearance of so tender an effusion.

"Yes, papa," cried the bold boy, "I wanted Clarissa to send it by the post, and put two stamps on it, for fear it should be too heavy for one—Miss Trevor has a box full of stamps, and I have directed it because I don't believe the postman could read Clarissa's little, mean writing. But Clarissa is such a sneak, papa; she wouldn't put it into the post, nor let me, though we passed the office. If I'd known she wouldn't put it in I'd have knocked it out of her hand with my whip, and had it in a jiffey—I hate girls—they're such cowards, and blabs, and make-believes!"

"In spite of all that, which I think is very true, my boy, I hope you won't like them too well some day!"

"Not I, papa; they never come up with a bold face and a stout heart, and speak out like a man, and say what they mean; but they pout, and sneak, and pretend, and cry in a corner. Look at Clarissa: she's been all day ready to cry, because you forgot her; and when I thought she was going to write, and say so, she writes to say she is very glad you were better amused, and hopes you'll never think of her, except when you've nothing else to do. If that isn't a story, what is, papa? and if she isn't a sneak, there's no such thing!"

"I didn't mean to tell a story, papa," said Clarissa, looking up with appealing eyes and quivering lip. "I only meant that I would rather you forgot to send for me than sent for me when—when—when you didn't want me."

"Oh, you true woman!" said her father, fondly kissing the head she buried in his bosom. "Give me the letter."

"Such humbug!" said the boy, riding on his father's stick.

Colonel Pevensey read:—

"MY OWN DEAR, KIND, BEAUTIFUL PAPA,—I love you so much, I thought you would have sent for me to pour out your tea. I do so love you—but you forgot your poor Clarissa; you forgot you had promised to ride with me, my dear papa, but I rode as well as I could; because I love you so, I mind all you say. I was very unhappy because you forgot me, but I did not cry, because you are vexed when I cry. But pray do not send for me if I am a trouble to you, and don't ride with me if it doesn't amuse you; I will also do all you tell me, and not cry if I can help it, but sit quiet and think of my own darling papa, and never vex him, because I love him so. I am, honoured and dear papa, your dutiful child,

"CLARISSA PEVENSEY."

"And never vex you because I love you so!" repeated her father, pressing her again and again to his heart. "And for the same reason, sweet, sweet child, I will never vex you. And how," he thought, "how would it

vex her in after years, were I not only to give her a step-mother, but that stepmother an inexperienced girl, whom I should love to distraction, and who would be every way unfit to introduce my girl, being a *parvenue* and an actress!"

To get rid of the depressing sense of sacrifice and sorrow, Colonel Pevensey began to romp with his children, and he was dancing wildly about the room with one in each arm, and both shrieking, the girl with fear, and the boy with glee, when Symons glided in.

The sight of his emissary quieted the colonel in a moment; he placed the children on the floor, and tried to gather from Symons's face what had occurred between him and Violet.

But Symons was a man who never allowed his eyes actually to encounter any others; all false characters avert their gaze.

"Go, my darlings," said the colonel, "I want to be alone."

With the ready obedience so characteristic of affection, Clarissa rose; but the boy said, "I want to stay."

"Clarissa too wants to stay," said her papa, "but she knows papa wants her to go."

"Oh, but she's only a girl."

"But she's a good girl, and that's the best thing this earth can show."

"No, a good boy's a better thing," said the young scapegrace, "and so here goes! I'm off first! come, Miss Sneak!" and so saying, he bounded out of the room, and Clarissa stole gently after him, after having first pressed her father's hand to her lips.

CHAPTER XLVI.

MISREPRESENTATION.

"WELL, Symons," said Colonel Pevensey, "how did she bear it?"

"At first like 'a woman scorned,'" said Symons. "She was in a deuce of a rage—"

"A rage!" said the colonel; "well, that's a relief; her grief would have touched me; but as for rage, *je m'en moque!* Then you don't think she's cut up about it?"

"Why, I can't say that exactly; I don't think she's at all the unsophisticated piece of devoted simplicity we both thought her. I fancy she'd laid a snare for your hand as well as your heart, colonel, and that ambition and interest, as well as love—that sort of love actresses feel for a handsome man of fashion and fortune—all are upset. I'd a fine scene with her when she really discovered that it was 'no go;' but I think I've done you the service of uprooting all hope, and I suspect she'll soon get over it. She thought it necessary to go off into a fainting fit, and while so engaged, I saw a letter open on the table from her handsome cousin—that insolent jackanapes Sharpe enlisted, and has such trouble with. The fellow, it seems, is her cousin, and in love with her, and she, I suppose, had encouraged him before she found, or fancied she could make, a better market of herself. Well, he abuses you, and even me, roundly—I don't think he's safe—I shall give Sharpe a hint to watch him. But I dare say she'll smile on him again now—a sad descent, though, for the proud little puss, from a colonel to a private. Perhaps, to break the fall, her affections will halt with me for a week or two; I saw some symptoms of it; at any rate, do not you fear—*elle se consolera!*"

"*Tant mieux,*" said Colonel Pevensey, turning away, but with a sickening sense of mortification and of anger against Violet, himself, and above all, Symons.

Oh, what a frightful power have the words of one man on the heart of another, and often on the destiny of a woman!

Colonel Pevensey did not pause to inquire whether all this was probable; he did not even remember for a moment the distrust he had felt when reflecting on the character of this very man, whose lies now outweighed so heavily, in Pevensey's mind, all Violet's tenderness and truth. The picture his cunning and vindictive informant had drawn, irritated Colonel Pevensey's pride, wounded his vanity, and outraged the real tenderness poor Violet, unaided by aught but truth and loveliness,

and love, had awakened in a heart so little susceptible of soft emotions. So little, because he had had so many love affairs; and so little love, because, since his fleeting fancy for Jeannetta—a fancy arising chiefly from his attributing to her all the exquisite genius and tenderness Violet had poured into her letters and her song—love and woman had been wearisome to him; and because nothing less than the truth, the innocence, the devotion, the gifted mind, and the passionate heart of Violet Woodville could have awakened in him that delight he had hardly ever tasted—not the delight of being loved, but the far greater and more exquisite enjoyment of loving! La Bruyère says: “On est plus heureux par l’amour qu’on a, que par celui qu’on inspire.” And certainly, if anything can tint the arid landscape of life with a roseate hue, it is the purple light of that love which makes the heart itself a sort of sun whence floods of glory are shed on all around. The love we inspire, but do not share, is only a gratification to the vanity; but the love we feel, and believe to be mutual, is

“The all
Of Paradise that has survived the fall!”

But if it is so beguiling an ecstasy in its happier moments, how bitter is its disappointment, how harrowing its despair! The true lover has no neutral tints on his palette; it is all bright and dazzling, gorgeous and golden, or dark and dismal—impenetrable gloom. Colonel Pevensy was himself surprised at the sickness of heart with which he felt that idol uprooted, whom he had so complacently and calmly resolved to dethrone.

When Symons suggested the probability of Violet's having ever encouraged her cousin, Valentine Woodville, a deadly jealousy of the poor young soldier, so young, so forlorn, and so beautiful in the Narcissus-like delicacy of nineteen, rose in Colonel Pevensy's heart; and when the light blue balls of Symons's eyes twinkled under his bushy light eyelashes and large white lids, as he suggested the possibility of her finding solace in him, the colonel felt inclined to dash him to the earth, and trample him under foot.

But he only laughed, and repeated Symons's words,

"*Elle se consolera ;*" and but for the ashy whiteness of his lips and cheeks, and the almost nervous sob that seemed to stifle that light laugh, Symons would not have had the luxury of knowing that he had made the man he so hated mad with jealousy, and sick with disappointment, and wretchedly in love with the woman he had insulted, resigned, and estranged for ever !

CHAPTER XLVII.

SOLITUDE AND SORROW.

VIOLET, exhausted in mind and body, slept many hours by the bright fire, which poor little Patience (the *child-of-all-work*) contrived, in spite of the threats and curses of her inebriated and terrible mistress, to keep alive through the night ; when at length the wretched girl awoke to a full sense of all the mortification, the misery, and the shame she had brought upon herself ; when she recalled all Symons's dreadful words, and more dreadful inuendoes, and, amid sobs and groans and stifled shrieks, realized to her breaking heart the fact, not only that her love was not returned, but that it was (with that of many others) despised, derided, and avoided. Consciousness became so intolerable, that an insane desire to die, a false and frantic notion, common to the passionate despair of youth and love, that she could cease at once to *be* and to feel, urged her to rush out into the cold grey morning, and from the heights of some dizzy cliff to throw herself into the boiling, dashing waves.

As this terrible longing grew into a settled plan, she tried to raise herself on the sofa ; and as she did so, she became, for the first time, aware that deadly chills benumbed her limbs, while her head seemed on fire—that her brain reeled, her frame shook, and that she had no power to stand, or even to sit upright ; racking pains in her head, feelings of sickness, and all the horrible forerunners of brain fever, assailed her at once ; but above, far above all her agonies, acute as they were, was the ever-recurring sense of despised, rejected, and still adoring love. "If I can but make these wretched limbs

bear me to some spot whence I can dash myself into—what ?” Oh, Violet ! Oblivion, or eternity of anguish ! At the thought, the salutary thought snatches of hymn, of prayers, and of precepts, learnt from the Book of Truth, in the long ago, stole into her mind, and broke from her lips, and tears—tears that perhaps saved her soul—gushed forth abundantly.

She sank on her knees, and buried her face in her pillow, and gasped forth—

“Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil !” Oh, am I fit to die ! ‘As the tree falleth, so shall it lie.’”

She remained some time in deep and fervent prayer ; and then she rose, and thinking she should breathe more freely by the wild sea, but no longer with any impious thought of self-destruction, she tried to cross her room, in order to get her cloak and bonnet from the adjoining bedroom ; but Violet was far more ill than she was aware of. She had scarcely risen with the intention of walking across the room, when her brain reeled, her limbs gave way, and she fell heavily to the floor, to all appearance lifeless.

It was about five o'clock in the morning, and a grey and cheerless light was struggling into the room. Poor little Patience, who even at that early hour was up, sweeping, scrubbing, and scouring, happened to be hard at work in the room under Violet's. She heard the fall, and she rushed up-stairs. She did not scream or cry, for she had from her cradle been used to act and to think ; she knew that her drunken mistress was the only creature in the house beside themselves, and that she would only impede and torment. So death-like was poor Violet's face, so still her pulse, and so cold her hand, her brow, her bosom, that Patience felt a terrible fear steal over her heart, that her dear, beautiful, young lady, as she called her, was dead.

She tried bathing her face with water, opening the window, holding a smelling-bottle to her nose, burning feathers, and all other similar expedients ; she then wisely laid her head upon the floor, level with her form, and darted out in search of medical assistance.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE YOUNG DOCTOR.

PATIENCE rang in vain at the houses of two or three surgeons. One did pop out a white cotton night-cap, but seeing a miserable-looking child, with bare arms and neck, and a shock head, he suggested it was a *gratis* case, and so he popped his head gently in again, silently fastened his window, and stole back to his bed. At length, at a door on which figured in large letters, on a brass plate, "Dr. Hegner, Surgeon, &c.," Patience saw a young, foreign-looking man, with a pair of large moustaches, and wrapped up in a cloak; he had evidently just returned to his home.

Patience called just as he was opening his door; and the shrill terror of her voice arrested his attention. She soon made him understand what she wanted; and when the young man heard that it was Miss Violante Woodhurst, the actress, whose state had so alarmed the poor little maid-of-all-work, he felt and expressed a lively concern and anxiety.

He made Patience wait while he provided himself with all he thought likely to be of use, and asked her many questions as he followed her to the house where Violet lodged.

"Is there a sweetheart in the case, my girl?" asked the young doctor.

"Oh, no, sir; Miss Woodhurst is above any such nonsense—she ain't one of that kind," said Patience, who, shrewd beyond her years, had her suspicions of the case, but too much love for Violet, and too much of the *esprit de corps* of her sex, to betray any surmise which had floated through her precocious heart and clever head.

"Why, she's a pretty girl, and an actress," said the young doctor, "and all the men are in love with her; why shouldn't she have a sweetheart if she liked—nay, for that matter, half-a-dozen, if she chose?"

"Why, because she's as particular and as proud as any in the land—she's as good as Queen Victoria or

Queen Hadelaide, or the Duchess of Kent, and as proud, too, though she is an actress—or was, poor dear lady,” sobbed Patience, “for perhaps by this time she ain’t nothing but dust and hashes. Oh my! oh my!”

“That we will soon ascertain,” said the young doctor, following Patience to Miss Woodhurst’s room. She lay just where Patience had left her, and seeing this, the poor child threw herself on her knees beside her, and sobbed aloud, and wrung her hands. But the young doctor’s more experienced eye soon discovered symptoms of life, suspended, but not extinct, and at the end of half-an-hour he had succeeded in restoring some degree of consciousness, and in awakening her from her deadly syncope.

In spite of all Patience’s cunning assertions, Violet’s wanderings soon betrayed to the young doctor something of what was passing in her mind, though, as she called alternately on Colonel Pevensey, Captain Symons, and Valentine Woodville, and mistook him by turns for each and all, he could not satisfactorily ascertain which of them had had power to darken her bright intellect and scatter her sweet senses! With the invaluable aid of clever and efficient little Patience, he applied leeches to her temples, administered what medicines he thought necessary, and got her to bed, and then he took his seat by her bedside and watched her as a mother watches a beloved infant, a skilful physician a curious case, and an artist his *beau-idéal* of loveliness.

Poor little Patience, delighted with his skill, his kindness, and his zeal, took him at once into her especial favour. She told him all she thought he ought to know, of the beautiful and kind lady, he was watching with an interest fast deepening into devotion. She got him to write an excuse for Violet’s non-appearance at the theatre. She was to have played Pauline in “The Lady of Lyons” that very evening; and was delighted when he suggested the adding a medical certificate of severe and even dangerous illness. At Patience’s request he visited her wretched old mistress, who was stamping and raving to the destruction of all hopes of getting Violet quiet, and yelling aloud for brandy and for gin. He administered a judicious antidote in a glass of her favourite liquid fire,

and ere long her turbulent spirit was quiet for a time. When all fear of interruption from her dreaded task-mistress was at an end, Patience, who knew that the young doctor had not broken his fast, brought him a comfortable little breakfast to Violet's bedside; and then, satisfied that her favourite was in good hands, went gaily about her thousand avocations as maid-of-all-work in a lodging-house, where attendance was included, and no washing put out.

And day stole on, the wretched day in which, burning with fever, and the agonies of her mind only to be guessed from her moans, her shrieks, and her convulsive clutching at the bed-clothes, Violet tossed her aching frame wildly about, and threw herself from one side of the bed to the other; and anon sat up, her eyes on fire, her cheeks crimson, her hair floating wildly about her, and rocked herself to and fro, nursing her agony as if it were a babe at her breast.

About noon, Captain Symons called. Patience did not quite know, though she more than half suspected, Violet's secret; but she did know that Captain Symons was odious to her—that she had overheard Miss Woodhurst speaking in bitterness and distress to him, and he retorting in anger and contempt; and she did know, that it was after a long interview with this odious and supercilious wretch, that she had found poor Violet in a state of such prostration and self-abandonment.

She therefore resolved, seconded by the young doctor, to whom she revealed her suspicions, that, come what would, Captain Symons should not be admitted—and assuming an air of unconsciousness, and practised, alas! in the fashionable lie of “not at home,” she came downstairs, just as he was rushing up, and told him Miss Woodhurst was gone out, to spend the day with a friend.

Disappointed and enraged, Captain Symons hit poor little Patience a sharp cut with his riding whip across her naked arm, and when she exclaimed:—

“What do you do that for, sir? Am I here to be knocked about by you?” he savagely pulled her ear, and grinning said, imitating her tone:—

“Yes, you are; and whenever you tell me bad news, with a broad grin, I'll make you smart for your pains!”

So saying, and muttering something about serving Miss Woodhurst the same, if she provoked him, he, nothing doubting the truth of Patience's statement, took his leave, and Patience stole to Violet's bedside, to tell the dear young doctor how cleverly she had got rid of the "ruffin," and to show him the brutal cut, which had marked her poor lean arm with a scarlet wale.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

"WELL, colonel," said Symons, rubbing his hands with well-assumed glee, "I have been to inquire after *la belle délaissée*, and you will be glad to hear she is not pining in solitude, or brooding over a breaking heart, for she is gone out for the day—picnicing, I believe, with a set of actors and actresses—and I dare say, is now pledging the stage Romeo, a fine young fellow, and madly in love with her, they say, in sparkling bumpers of British champagne! As I told you before, *elle se consolera!*"

"And as I told you before, *tant mieux!*" said Colonel Pevensey, but with a hollow laugh and a pale lip, which did not escape the watchful and gloating malice of the envious parasite.

"Shall we have a game of billiards, colonel?"

"No, I thank you; I am going to ride out with my children."

"Look here, colonel; here comes Violet's cousin, the young private, Valentine Woodville!"

"Stop," said the colonel. "If they are cousins, how is it that her name is Woodhurst, and his Woodville?"

"Oh, colonel, Woodville is their real name, a good old name too; but she, to disguise it a little, when going on the stage, called herself, by Merryweather's suggestion, Violante Woodhurst, instead of Violet Woodville. I believe the pride of the whole family amounts almost to insanity, and though all but starving, the old birds I mean, they would die of shame were they to know that this girl is on the stage, and that the boy has enlisted.

See, the saucy jackanapes can hardly bring himself to make a proper salute—look, he actually will not see me!—did you mark how ghastly pale he turned, and what a deadly fire there was in his eye?"

"Poor young fellow," said the colonel, who had no mean tyranny in his nature; "no wonder he hates us, if he thinks we stand between him and his first love. I dare say, in his wretched young heart, he believes that we are only trifling with, and seeking to ruin, the woman he would die to wed! Oh, I feel for him very much!"

"He doesn't deserve it, colonel; he's the most insolent, insubordinate, ill-conducted fellow in the regiment. Sergeant Sharpe tells me he sometimes thinks he's mad. He's proud as Lucifer, because, though poor as a rat, and literally starving when Sharpe enlisted him, it seems his father is an old fool, the last of a race of country squires, who owns one tumble-down old manor-house, where his forefathers owned half the county; but devoured at once by pride and poverty, he and four sons think themselves above all the ways by which the poor earn a livelihood; live on what they can pick and steal; dress in green baize; and keep aloof, alike from the higher orders, who despise them, and the middle and lower classes, whom they despise."

"Well, but how did this poor fellow come to enlist?"

"Why, by what Sergeant Sharpe has wormed out of him, this beautiful cousin, Violet, was brought up by the 'old squire,' as he is called, who fed her infant mind on Shakspeare till the stage mania bit her; being a generous and daring girl, and ashamed of being a burden on the proud and half-starved old pauper, and having some female relative connected with the stage, Violet ran away and engaged herself to Merryweather. This young Valentine and his elder brother (a moody and morose kind of chap) were, it seems, both in love with her; they fought for her, teased her life out, and, I dare say, helped to drive her from her miserable home. When she was gone, the one, I believe, went melancholy mad, and the other more of the raving sort. He, Valentine, set out in search of her, friendless and penniless, and was found by Sharpe dying of want by the roadside;

Sharpe, enlisted him, and, though gloomy and dejected, he did pretty well till he discovered Violet as Juliet. Since then, and since our notice of her has been the talk of the men, he has shown symptoms of insubordination, and I think him altogether such a dangerous fellow, that I have told Sharpe, who hates him for trying to come the gentleman over him, to keep a tight hand over him, and a sharp look-out."

"Well," said Colonel Pevensey, "it is a very sad story. I feel for the poor fellow—so young, so devoted, and so miserable; and I only wish there were anything one could do to mitigate the horrors of his situation."

"Oh, Sharpe tells me, that the more kindly he's treated the worse he behaves. Sharpe, just in fun, joked him about getting promotion through his pretty cousin's interest with you, and he rushed at him, evidently intending to throttle him; however, his foot slipped (luckily for him) before he laid hands on his sergeant—he fell against a bench and cut his head open, and so no notice was taken of the intention, as it ended in his losing a pint or so of his hot blood, for Sharpe tells me he cut an artery and bled like a pig; but on another occasion, a fellow-private pledging the colonel's Violet in a quart of beer, our young desperado seized the jug, and dashed the contents into his face. It was made up somehow, I forget how; but this will show you what sort of a fellow Valentine Woodville is. However, I dare say he'll soon find out that you, colonel, have nothing more to say to the girl; and as for me, though, as I told you before, I might take pity on her, yet I hear the impertinent jackanapes (probably in his cups) has declared, that though he is a private, and I a captain, he has no fear whatever of me as a rival, and believes Violet wouldn't smile on me if there wasn't another man in the world. He has abused my face, laughed at my small figure, and swears I am goggle-eyed and sandy. He told Sharpe he should scorn the girl if she preferred me to him—but you—oh, that was quite another matter; and though he could kill her for her folly, he could understand it too!"

"Poor young fellow!" said the colonel; "I am half

inclined to send for him, and tell him I am interested in his story, and wish to benefit him."

"He'll misunderstand it, colonel, and think you want his interest with his cousin. Her love, which is such a nuisance and bore to you, is his *beau-idéal* of the bliss of Eden. *Au revoir, mon colonel!*"

So saying, the fox stole away.

CHAPTER L.

THE REACTION.

"A NUISANCE and a bore," thought Colonel Pevensey; "how little can he read my heart! How little does he know how the poor girl, whom for her own sake I have so rudely flung off, is enshrined in my heart of hearts! How I miss the low sweet music of her voice! how I recall, and dwell with passionate delight on her 'swimming looks of speechless tenderness!' How often I am tempted to undo all I have done, and to rush to the sacrifice, either of her prospects or my own!"

Just at this moment the pony phaeton in which Colonel Pevensey had promised to drive Clarissa and Marmaduke came to the door, and, flushed with pride and joy, Clarissa glided in gently to remind him, and the boy shouted aloud,—

"Hollo, papa! Let's be off!" and seizing his father by the arm, proceeded to pull him down-stairs.

During the drive, the quiet happiness of his lovely Clarissa, and the boisterous mirth of his noble boy, drove poor Violet in some degree from his thoughts; but when he brought them home to their early tea, and found he had still half an hour to while away before dinner, the fascinating face and form of Violet rose on his mind; and he wandered forth—oh, weak and irresolute man!—half-resolved just to walk through the street in which she dwelt, and to look at the windows from which he had so often seen her fair young face grow red and red by turns at his approach. As he hastened, gazing at everything, but thinking of nothing he

looked at, a many-coloured play-bill attracted his attention. A play-bill was associated in his mind with Violet, and he stopped to read it; as he read, his colour came and went, his heart stood still, his knees shook, a cold moisture stood on his brow, and he was obliged to seize the railing against which the bill was hung to avoid falling to the ground.

The announcement which had so agitated him was worded thus:—

“Mr. Merryweather begs to inform the nobility, gentry, and the public in general that in consequence of the sudden and dangerous illness of Miss Violante Woodhurst, the opera of ‘Der Freischutz’ will be substituted for the play of ‘The Lady of Lyons,’ in which Miss Violante Woodhurst was to have performed her favourite part of Pauline Deschappelles.”

So stunned was Colonel Pevensey by this announcement that he actually read the whole tedious play-bill through, without seeing that there was nothing that concerned him, but the few dreadful words which seemed almost to glare upon him with the frightful accusation that he had killed the loveliest, the most lovely and beloved of women.

“It may be exaggerated—it may not be true,” gasped the colonel. “Did not Symons say she was gone on some party of pleasure—and did not I believe it? Believe it, yes, in defiance of all I have seen of her devotion! Fool, ungenerous fool that I was to believe such idle tales of one I know so well! And while I cursed her in my heart for being able to go abroad and enjoy her young existence, and accept from others the homage I refused, and felt a narrow-hearted vengeance against her for not sinking under my cold withdrawal of the love she deserves so well, she is perhaps dying of a broken heart, or struggling, with all the energy of early youth, with the dark angel of untimely death! I will go to her, I will nurse her, I will see her, watch her, tear her from the grave, and, ah! how will it end? Alas! I cannot foresee—I cannot immolate the creature that loves me! Stop, stop!” he cried wildly, for at this moment, frightfully rouged, wigged, with cork eyebrows, and old garments covered with a Spanish cloak with a fur collar

and ormolu clasp and chain, his rusty hat placed rakishly on one side, and coats of vermillion unable to conceal the ravages bad paint had done his skin, Mr. Merryweather, the manager, hurried by. Intent on a part he was learning with difficulty, he did not see the colonel till he felt his tight and nervous grasp on his old and rotten cloak; he turned his scarlet and haggard cheek over the margin of his black leather stock, thus sadly discomposing and endangering a shirt collar cut out of writing paper; and recognising the colonel, he took from the bosom of a showy double-breasted waistcoat a dirty hand, the short fingers of which were covered with rings composed of ormolu and coloured glass, and taking off his hat as if he had seen Victoria herself, he exclaimed in a theatrical manner:—

“To what does so humble an individual as Mr. Merryweather owe the condescending notice of the Honourable Colonel Pevensey?”

Colonel Pevensey, far too anxious, and too much in earnest to notice or respond to this address, pulled the poor and terrified actor-manager to the bill, and touching the announcement of Violet's illness with his cane, said, in a hoarse voice:—

“Is that true, sir? What is your authority for that—what is Miss Violante Woodhurst's illness?”

“Wait a moment, Colonel Pevensey! I beg your pardon, sir—I am very sorry if you are disappointed—many are; and if ‘Der Freischutz,’ the part of Der Freischutz by your humble servant—”

“Pshaw!” said the colonel, “all I want to know is, whether Miss Woodhurst is really ill, and what is your authority for making such a statement?”

By this time Mr. Merryweather had found what he was fumbling in his pocket for, the young doctor's note and certificate, which Colonel Pevensey had no sooner read than crumpling them in his hand, and pushing the old actor aside, he rushed past him, and was soon out of sight.

Colonel Pevensey did not stop till he arrived at Violet's lodging; the young doctor had just left her, to compose himself some anodyne from which he hoped some success in allaying the acute nervous irritation and wild mental

anguish of his patient. By this time the quick and precocious little Patience had gathered enough from Violet's alternate murmurings and ravings, to suspect that unrequited love for Colonel Pevensy, and some harsh message brutally conveyed by Captain Symons, had caused the terrible attack, from which it was so doubtful whether she would ever recover. However, when she opened the door, cautiously, lest it should be Captain Symons, and beheld Colonel Pevensy, pale, trembling, out of breath with speed and alarm, and stammering out:—

“How is Miss Woodhurst?”

She, in the joyful hope that his presence might restore her whom his cruelty had all but destroyed, exclaimed:—

“Oh, thank Heaven you are come, before it is too late—”

“What do you mean, my good girl?” said the colonel, who had a little recovered his presence of mind.

“Oh, a word to the wise,” said Patience. “You asked, sir, how poor Miss Woodhurst is. As the doctor says she's alive, and that's all that can be said for her—”

“Can I see her, my girl?” said the colonel, trying to slip a sovereign into Patience's hand. “I am her friend, her true friend!”

Strange to say, the little knotty, bony hand of the maid-of-all-work did not open to receive the “oil of palms.” It closed tightly against it, and the poor child burst into tears, while she said:—

“A friend! a true friend! Ah, that's what she wants indeed! put up your gold, sir. If I didn't believe the sight of you is the only thing on earth that could do her good, poor young lady! thousands of those golden guineas shouldn't make me show her in her present state; but as it is—come up-stairs, sir; I hope I'm doing right; I only know she's been calling out your name half the night.”

The colonel's heart stood still; for through the closed door he could hear a shriek and a moan, and his own name murmured in the wild accents of entreaty and reproach.

“We, that is I and the doctor, have been obliged to

confine her, sir," said Patience, apologetically, "though it went to our hearts to do it; and even the doctor, though they be a hard-hearted set, he cried over her, she held up her poor hands so pitiful; but Lor', sir, she tried to dash her poor brains out against the wall, and tore her hair, and clutched her throat till she was like strangled, and so there wasn't no choice you see, sir."

And Colonel Pevensey did see, stretched across the small bed, and exhausted with a recent paroxysm, foam on her lips, and a wild and almost wolfish expression in her eyes, the creature he had always seen so gentle, so tender, and so exquisite in her maiden and modest beauty.

A hideous strait waistcoat, made of a material similar to that of which bed-ticks are composed, and with broad leather straps and buckles, kept her arms pinioned to her sides, and secured her to the bed; she rolled her head restlessly about, and the tangled masses of her radiant hair floated on the pillow, but a broad, black ribbon kept them from her eyes, and covered the marks of dozens of leeches, which had scarred the marble polish of her fine forehead.

She looked fixedly at Colonel Pevensey as he entered, but without recognising him in the least; on the contrary, she laughed, with a hollow, maniac laugh, and said:—

"Ha, ha, ha! who sent you here to torment me, and flout at me, and stare, and mock? It must be Captain Symons, the cruel, bad man; not my own Pevensey, my beautiful, my kind, my gentle one! Listen, he doesn't love poor Violet; he wishes her to go, far, far away, and never see him more; and he thinks she loved him like others love him, and would tease, and persecute, and follow him; he doesn't know that she would die a thousand deaths to save him one pang! What did he think," she added, with a wild shriek, "when he sent that wretch, that villain, to break her poor heart! Look here—look here—I cannot stir; see how the cruel Symons has bound me; he has set fire to my brain, with his phosphoric flames; his hand is tearing my heart out of my bosom; he is dashing me against the rocks! Oh, Pevensey, dearest! do not let them torture me thus!

Use my hands, kind stranger; let me write two

lines to my Pevensey—I will not hurt you, Symons, only let me tell him that I will go—that he shall never see me, never hear of me more; I am not one of many; I am alone in love! Ha, ha, ha! I see Symons sneer—I know he lies, foully lies; and he will lie about me, to my own angelic love—Pevensey, Pevensey, come to me! Save me, they are killing me—oh! will he not hear me, will he leave me to the tormentors?”

“My darling! my sweet one! my poor, poor child,” said Colonel Pevensey, quite overcome by the heart-breaking ejaculations of the wretched girl; and throwing himself on his knees beside the bed, he buried his face in the clothes, and the strong man sobbed convulsively.

Violet had worked herself up into a paroxysm too violent for words, and which now vented itself in shrieks, groans, and incoherent ravings.

CHAPTER LI.

A RIVAL.

At this moment a knock announced the return of the doctor. Patience, with a delicacy, which shows that there is such a thing as innate tact, said:—

“Sir, I am going to let in the doctor, and to show him up; would you like to walk into the next room, sir, or will you sit down in that arm-chair, and hear what he says?”

Colonel Pevensey understood that the poor girl did not wish him to expose his anguish to the medical man, and he kindly pressed the hand—albeit, the hard, knotty hand of a maid-of-all-work—with which she softly touched his arm.

He then hastily rose, and hurried into the adjoining room, till such time as he could recover some degree of composure, and hide the traces of the deepest emotions he had ever known.

In the meantime, Patience first assisted the doctor to administer the powerful sedative from which he hoped so much, and then told him, in a whisper, that the great gentleman, whose unkindness had driven Miss Wood-

hurst raving mad, had repented of his cruelty, and had been weeping over her like a child.

The young doctor, who had long been an ardent admirer of Violet in her public capacity, and whose pity for her present dreadful sufferings was indeed akin to love, heard, with considerable annoyance, distrust, and incipient jealousy, of the arrival of such an intruder; but there was no help for it, and a sort of anxiety to know a man who had had the power to unsettle such an intellect, bewilder such a brain, and almost break such a heart as Violet's, induced him to say, when his patient showed some symptoms of weakness and torpor—

"Darken the room, Patience, and sit here at the bed's head till the nurse I have engaged comes to relieve you. I will go and make acquaintance with this redoubtable lady-killer, and see what stuff he is made of."

It was with a feeling of jealousy and dislike, which gave a great coldness and constraint to his manners, that the young doctor entered Violet's little sitting-room; but all such feelings gave way when, with a frankness and an almost affectionate earnestness, very captivating in the proud and dignified, Colonel Pevensey held out his hand, and said—

"Ah! good Samaritan! have you been able to pour any oil or wine into those wounds? What hopes can you give me that the loveliest, the most excellent, and the most gifted of God's creatures will be restored to health, to reason, and to—her friends?"

The doctor was startled out of all his jealousy and ill-temper by the majestic presence, the noble mien, the condescension, and the evident anguish of the colonel. He could see that he had been weeping; he could see that his cheek was ghastly pale, that his white lip quivered, and that his hand trembled; and his first thought was—

"No wonder Violet adores such a man as that!"

"I think, sir," he answered, gently, "I think I see, for the first time, symptoms of a quiet which is not the result of exhaustion merely. I have administered a very strong sedative, justifiable only by the violence of the cerebral excitement. If it fail, I have no hope, no resource—death or permanent insanity must then close

this dreadful scene; but the youth, the general health, and the fine constitution of Miss Woodhurst give me the greatest hope."

"Excuse me, my dear sir," said the colonel, approaching the young doctor, and taking his hand; "nothing but a deep and very peculiar interest in your lovely patient would embolden me to ask you is there, in the resources of science or in the ranks of your profession, one thing or one physician, or any things or any physicians, who could be of any use as co-operators with you in this appalling case. Let no consideration of expense deter you from sending at once, and by express, for any medical man, however eminent, or any remedies, however costly, that could offer even a chance of saving that excellent young lady. Speak! It would be a comfort to me to be in any way serviceable in her cause; I will give you a cheque to any amount you may require."

"Thank you; I feel your goodness, your confidence, and your generosity; but I do not see that anything can be done by new doctors or new remedies in such a case as this. *The crisis is arrived*, and before, even with the most favourable circumstances, any physician of eminence could be here, Miss Woodhurst will be either out of all danger, or lost for ever. Come with me, and watch her for a few minutes. All groans and shrieks have ceased; if my anodyne takes effect, she may sleep for three or four days, and awake convalescent; if not, the struggle will, probably, not be a long one."

The colonel and the doctor found Violet sinking into a sort of doze, from which she awoke ever and anon, but at longer intervals each time, with a sharp cry or a deep groan; but by degrees her breath grew deeper and more regular, her face more tranquil; the doctor unloosed her hands, which, to his great joy, she folded on her bosom in an attitude which Patience said was habitual to her.

At the colonel's entreaty, the straps of the strait waistcoat were unbuckled; she turned on her side, buried her face in her pillow, and sank into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER LII.

LE REVEIL DU DESESPOIR.

"I THINK," said the doctor, "we may now, as far as life is concerned, pronounce her safe; the important question, as to whether her reason will be permanently impaired, we cannot decide upon till she awakes. I must now hasten to some patients I have neglected too long, while watching this most interesting case. Patience! you will see she wants for nothing, and run to fetch me should any important change occur. Colonel Pevensey, I have the honour to wish you good night. I dare say we shall meet here again to-morrow."

The poor young doctor seemed to expect the colonel would take his leave simultaneously with himself; but Patience had just been summoned by a loud and angry yell from her mistress, and Colonel Pevensey had resolved to watch poor Violet, at least till the crisis was past. So with a jealous and disappointed heart Dr. Hegner departed, and Dr. Pevensey, drawing the white curtains of the little bed, proceeded to establish himself in the arm-chair, behind them, as head-nurse.

All through that night the colonel watched, and Violet slept, apparently a deep and dreamless sleep. Dr. Hegner looked in and pronounced that all was going on favourably, and this time the colonel left the house with him; but returned in the evening again to watch the sufferer through the night. Patience said she had called her once, and asked for water, but before she could give it had sunk to sleep again. Seeing her thus convalescent, the colonel left her, called again the next day, and sat again at her bedside the ensuing night, beginning to fear she would never wake again. Patience watched with him, and not thinking, with the French, that *qui dort dine*, began to fear she would die of hunger, and to propose awaking her; at this crisis she was called away, and the colonel was still too anxious about Violet to leave her quite alone.

Towards dawn Patience returned; but, worn out with vigils and hard work, she soon fell fast asleep.

It was about five in the morning, when Violet, whose good and deep breathing Colonel Pevensey had been watching as if his own existence depended on each breath, awoke with a start. She sat up in the bed and looked about her.

"What is all this?—what does it mean?" she moaned, as she passed her hands over the strait waistcoat, and felt the bandage on her forehead. "Ah, I know—I have been mad, mad! Oh, Harcourt, you have driven me mad!—and you will hear of this, and despise me yet the more!"

Colonel Pevensey drew his military cloak around him, and retired yet further behind the curtains.

Violet sprang out of bed; she went to the window.

"It is morning!" she said, "morning! which means that a day of misery has begun!—and there sleeps poor Patience. I used to pity thee, poor child of toil! I envy thee now! Thou knowest not the deep, deep shame and degradation of a love rejected—misunderstood and reviled. How he must despise me! how unwomanly, how unmaidenly must seem, even to him, the persevering, the ever-haunting love, which he casts aside with scorn, like all the other forward evidences of vile coquetry, degrading passion, mean interest, frippery vanity, and vile ambition; and the holy love of my heart he has classed with such as these, and trampled on as such!"

Violet threw herself on her knees, buried her face in the bed-clothes, and sobbed aloud.

Oh, how Colonel Pevensey longed to come forth, to clasp her to his yearning heart; to tell her she wronged, deeply wronged, herself and him, and to pour out all the tenderness and ecstasy of this the first real passion he had ever known! But the fear of startling away returning reason, and changing the wailing despondency and melancholia of the present moment, for the far more dangerous frenzy which had preceded it, kept him watching her with distended eyes, lips apart, and wildly beating heart, but perfectly immoveable.

Violet was still partly dressed, as she had been when Patience first summoned the doctor; she sat down before her toilet glass, and held the lamp to her face.

Colonel Pevensey beheld, for one moment, that pale and beautiful face of unutterable woe.

"He would not know me now, he could not love me now!" she murmured. "What heavy eyes! what dark circles sorrow has traced around them. Poor lips and cheeks! instead of the rosy hues of hope, ye wear the pallid livery of despair. And yet his heavenly lips did touch this brow—his dear, dear hand did play with these dull, tangled locks! Did he really hate me all the while? Oh, shame! oh, deep, deep degradation!"

She rocked herself to and fro for some time, in anguish unutterable, and then rose hastily, smoothed her hair, tore off the wretched waistcoat, put on a wrapper and a cloak, took a bonnet, with a thick black veil, from a closet close by, put on even her gloves, and, to Colonel Pevensey's surprise and terror, suddenly rushed down-stairs, undrew the bolts, and darted out into the street.

Silently and stealthily, Colonel Pevensey glided after her. She never once looked behind her, though he kept so close to her, that he could have grasped her cloak. At first her strength kept no pace with her excitement, but by degrees the frenzy of the moment seemed to give tone to her limbs, and she fled like a frightened hare across the streets that divided her from the country, and then darted up a path which led to a projecting and beetling cliff.

When the wretched girl came within a short run of the point, from which Colonel Pevensey felt certain—and as he felt it, the blood curdled in his veins—that she meant to fling herself, she paused for a moment, and threw herself on her knees.

"Am I mad!" she wildly cried, tossing her arms aloft. "Oh, Father! am I mad? and is it a delusion, that by casting this wretched body from this giddy height, I can get rid of this ever-haunting consciousness of love, of sin, of shame, and of rejection? Is it a delusion, that those cool waters will quench the fire of this brain, and of this heart? Oh, Thou who knowest the agony, forgive, if in this too I sin. My poor uncle, how will he weep! my poor aunt, when will she smile again! And Valentine, but Symons shall taunt me no more with his mocking pity, and Harcourt—oh, my wildly worshipped one

Harcourt!—you shall no more confound my miserable love with all you scorn in others; for of all who love you, Violet alone, the spurned, the despised, would die for you thus. Farewell, then, angel of this dark and troublous world! and should the waves bring back and dash at your feet, as you pass gaily along, in playful dalliance with those whom you have so heartlessly classed with me—should they show you the lifeless form of what once was Violet—if, from that dead form, you learn how madly you were loved—Harcourt Pevensey, adored one, I shall not have died in vain!"

So saying, the poor frenzied girl arose, and prepared to rush forward, and spring from that giddy height, into the waters that boiled below, and into eternity! But at her first step forward, a strong arm was thrown round her waist, a well-known voice was in her ear, the breath of him she adored so guiltily fanned her cheek, and the words:—

"Violet, dearest! maid of my bosom! darling of my heart! chosen of my life! Live for the sake of your devoted Pevensey!"

And as he spoke, and as the certainty that it was indeed her beloved stole over her heart, the sudden revulsion checked the flow of her excited blood, boiling in her veins with the horrible resolution of the moment, and with a wild shriek, Violet fainted.

Colonel Pevensey raised her in his arms, and carried her to a spot, where a little hollow in the cliffs, lined with short turf and wild flowers, formed a sort of bower; there he gently placed her, and there he threw himself on his knees beside her; and as the cool breeze of morning freshened, and as he unloosed her cloak and bonnet, the colour returned to her cheeks and lips, and, with a deep sigh, she woke.

But when he beheld him kneeling beside her, and when their eyes met, and she saw that his were full of tears, and felt him press her to his bosom, and cover her brow, her cheeks, and lips, with gentle kisses, tears came to the relief of her bursting heart, and as she sobbed upon his bosom, a more natural and tranquil feeling returned to her own.

And Violet was saved!

CHAPTER LIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUE LOVE.

It was some time before either Colonel Pevensey or his Violet could give their wild and agitated emotions any language but that of incoherent and broken ejaculations.

And oh, how little do we dream, while dragging on a quiet, uneventful life of decency and order, what a passionate part some are playing in the drama so spiritless to us.

The busy world of Brighton, busy with the small business of the vain, the idle, or the interested, lay hushed in sleep; and the morning dreams, as vapid as the dreamlets, haunting every pillow; and there, in that bower in the cliffs, he who was the "observed of all observers, the glass of fashion, and the mould of form," the object of so many hopes, and plans, and schemes, sat, with the love of so many hearts, the unconscious idol of so many fancies, "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes," the *beau-ideal* of Psyche's self, watched through a night of frenzy, dragged from eternal perdition, weeping in his bosom like a penitent child, his martial cloak flung around her form, and her beautiful eyes fixed on his, as if she would read his very soul. But suddenly the arm with which she gently drew his face towards her, ceased to compel—a cloud stole across the clear azure of her eyes, and her lips quivered.

"What is it, my darling?" said Colonel Pevensey, anxiously—"what sad thought has come to trouble us in this Eden of the heart?"

"Ah, dearest!" said Violet, "a dreadful thought! But oh, I feel its truth in my very heart of hearts."

"There can be no truth, my love, in any thought that can make you unhappy now."

"Oh, yes, there is—there is the thought that all you feel for me is pity—not love—or only so much love as your generous nature would bestow on the wretched girl whom love for you had driven to destruction."

"No, dearest, no! I am not the unselfish, generous,

pitying soul you deem me. It is not your love for me that makes the rapture of this hour, but mine for you—a love, the intensity and involuntary devotion of which I learnt only after I had resigned you to an unmanly scruple. That the consciousness that I am so dear to you fans and feeds this flame I cannot deny; but I love you now, my own sweet Violet, with a love that would exist even if you ceased to love me! You are, my Violet, that *beau-ideal* of woman in my heart which I have sought in vain through life—so beautiful, and yet not vain—an intellect so bright, and yet so feminine—gentle without apathy—so fond, so true, and yet so sensitive, so delicately chaste. Violet, it is a strange thing for me to say, but it is no less strange than true—I love, in the full and passionate meaning of the term, for the first time!”

“Oh, dearest!” sobbed Violet, “what pride—what rapture for my heart is this!”

“Yes, Violet, I love, and I know that I am loved! What, then? think you a cold world, with its heartless notions, its worship of symbols, and its mockery of realities, its hissing whispers, and its haunting sneers, shall come between me and the honour every manly bosom delights to pay to the saint he has enshrined, and the queen he has enthroned? Violet,” he said, gently lifting her from his lap, in which he had cradled her like a child, and seating her on the turf, while, with the true chivalry of love, he knelt before her, “Violet, forget all the narrow-minded folly of the past. Here at your feet I lay myself, and the poor all I can offer in return for that jewel of the world, I would wear henceforth in my heart of hearts. Violet, will you be that angel of my life, the wife of my bosom? Speak, dearest! or let me construe that tearful silence into a sweet consent! So be it then!” said Colonel Pevensey, rising, and clasping her to his heart.

And Violet wept on, but spoke not.

“Come, then, my affianced one,” said the colonel. “How pale, how cold you are! Still very, very ill, I fear, my love. Come, I will see you within a few steps of your door—I dare not attend you home, for no breath of suspicion must sully the spotless fame of my bride, and

even for the rapture of tending you I must not run the risk of misconstruction; but promise me, sweet one, you will go to bed and nurse yourself, and take all possible care, that can ensure an entire and a prompt recovery. And remember, beloved, you are nursing yourself for happiness and me. Say, sweet one, you will soon be well?"

"I will," murmured Violet, softly. And Pevensey raised her cold hand to his lips, as a knight might have done that of an empress, and he watched her from the corner of a street close by, till she had entered her own abode; and then Colonel Pevensey returned home, passed his children's door with a sort of pang, which it required all the recollections of Violet's loveliness and love to allay; and, worn out with his strange, eventful night, he threw himself on his bed and slept.

CHAPTER LIV.

VALENTINE WOODVILLE.

For some days Violet continued to keep her bed, very, very ill. But the mental excitement was gone, and it was bodily suffering and physical prostration that young Doctor Hegner had to combat with now.

Colonel Pevensey, justly afraid of endangering the reputation of her he had resolved to marry, did not venture again into Violet's sick-room, but he constantly waylaid the young doctor to inquire after her progress. He sent two or three times a-day to her abode, and when the shades of night came to shroud him from observation, he passed many hours walking up and down the street in which she lived, and watching the faint light that streamed from her bedroom window. Every evidence of devoted and watchful love that man could lavish on maiden glory in, Colonel Pevensey showered upon the poor and friendless girl—every delicacy that he thought could excite or tempt her appetite, all the fairest fruits in and out of season, the freshest and most exquisite flowers, books, magazines, toys, trinkets, and, better far, and dearer than all, notes that seemed the outpouring

of the passionate love of a manly and devoted heart ;—and yet, in spite of all this, Violet's buoyant spirit did not return, and the "rose of snow" seemed to have usurped the empire of her cheeks.

The attentions of her sentimental and half-German doctor had assumed the impassioned but melancholy tone of desponding love ; and every fresh and costly evidence of Colonel Pevensey's devotion excited his anger and his jealousy. Having no small share of self-esteem, and no mean opinion of his own powers of winning and of pleasing, he chose to consider Colonel Pevensey in the light of a rival trying to outbid him for Violet's love ; for at two-and-twenty, conceited, good-looking, full of German sentiment, with long auburn ringlets, moustaches, and beard, and the picturesque but absurd dress and figure of a German student, he could not believe that a man of the world, of Colonel Pevensey's age, could rival him fairly with a romantic girl of eighteen.

But the fact was, that to Violet, his long visits, his wild and sentimental rhapsodies, his fixed gaze, his mystic tirades, half love and half philosophy, and his evident and melodramatic jealousy of Colonel Pevensey were fast becoming quite unbearable.

Captain Symons knew that Violet was ill, dangerously ill—but he did not know that Colonel Pevensey was aware of it, for when first it was announced in the play-bills, he wrote him the following note :—

"DEAR COLONEL,—Lest your kind heart should be rendered uneasy by the announcement of Miss Woodhurst's illness, I write to say I have made inquiries, and I find it is all a flam of Merryweather's. The fact is, she is so mortified and disappointed, having made sure of your hand, and perhaps boasted of her prospects, that she has cut short her engagement with the Brighton Theatre, and is, I believe, gone home for a season. I dare say when she has got over her disappointment in you, and the reversion of a coronet, she will re-appear on the theatrical horizon all the brighter for this sudden eclipse—rumours of a profitable engagement on the London boards are afloat among the Brighton people. Well, she is in every respect so good an actress that

wish her well anywhere but here; as far as I am concerned, I am sorry she is off, for she is a clever and a pretty creature, and the theatre is no lounge without her; but with your kind heart, credulous temper, and angelic children, I do think she was a most dangerous schemer; and as you are what I most respect, love, and care for on earth, why, by Heaven! colonel, I am glad she is gone.

“Your humble but devoted

“C. S.”

With this subtle explanation Captain Symons thought he had diverted or quieted all Colonel Pevensy's doubts and suspicions; and as Colonel Pevensy, now that he really loved Violet, could not bear to hear her name polluted by Symons's false lips, and as he wished for no confidant in the great and startling resolution he had taken, and the important event he meant to bring about, directly Violet was restored to health, he gladly availed himself of Symons's deception, and so plainly signified that the subject was distasteful to him, that Symons did not dare to introduce it again.

With regard to himself, having two or three times failed in an attempt to see Violet—for she had a resolute, a stalwart, and watchful nurse now, ever in attendance—he had resolved quietly to await her restoration to health and to her profession.

His selfish and sensual love was not independent of the bloom, the beauty, the wit, the animation, or even the toilette of its object; pale cheeks, heavy eyes, wasted limbs, an attenuated frame, a drooping spirit, and a wailing voice, had no charms or interest for the son of Epicurus, and of Mammon; and when the sly old nurse, playing at once upon his vanity and his fear, insinuated that Violet's symptoms were not unlike those of incipient small-pox, he, remembering that his face (such as it was) was his fortune, rushed out of the house, and knew no rest till he had had himself vaccinated by the surgeon of the regiment.

All this time the poor young private, Violet's cousin, the half broken-hearted Valentine Woodville, was undergoing all the martyrdom of jealousy and disappointed

love, and all the misery the military profession, in its lowest grade, is to a man who, with the birth, the habits, and the sensitive feelings of a gentleman, finds himself not merely the companion, but the butt, the jest, the inferior in position, of those often the coarse, profane, and even cruel.

While the unutterable misery of his mind added to the languor and nervous irritability of a frame naturally delicate, the ever-recurring and monotonous exercises and toils of his profession worried his spirit and exhausted his strength; and reckless from misery, and hated as any proud, sensitive, and delicate human being always is among those equal in position, but low and coarse and vulgar in feelings and in habits, he, miserable wretch, was always transgressing some rule, neglecting some duty, offending some low-bred bully — a corporal, or, worse still, a sergeant—and entailing upon himself, in addition to the wearing fatigues of his profession, punishments ill-proportioned to his strength, and which almost unfitted him for his regular duties. Often during the sleepless nights which succeeded the over-exertion of the wasting frame, the thought of desertion would suggest itself to his mind; and plan upon plan would form itself in his brain, and seem for a time feasible and promising; but with the morning light, better views and better feelings came. Was he not a Woodville! In spite of his wretched position, his coarse associates, his brutal tyrants and tormentors snoring around, and making even the hour of repose hideous, did he not belong to a pure and ancient race—a race whose boast it was, that it had never known a disgraced or coward son, a frail or dishonoured daughter. Should he bring the first foul blot on that old name, and bow his father's head, and break his mother's heart?

True misery, the misery of despairing love, had enlisted him under her banner, and hunger had sold him to his brutal sergeant for a lower price than that a farmer's wife would ask for a chicken. He, in whose veins flowed the blood of hundreds of generations of gentlemen, he was at the beck of a sergeant, the illegitimate offspring of a brutal knacker and an oyster-girl; there was scarcely a corporal who looked down upon him, or a private who

marched at his side, hating him for his decency and his modest pride, who was not born of the low, the coarse, and often the profligate.

And he was obliged to obey the haughty, the cruel, and the insolent commands of the bully, Sergeant Sharpe. Encouraged to break his spirit by Captain Symons, who hated him with the mean hate of revenge, for personal remarks, spitefully repeated, and envied him his fine person and lofty bearing—yes, the poor, the isolated, the desolate young private had, in addition to the anguish of disappointed love—the first, the only love of his young heart—in addition to the sense of degradation, and the distasteful toil of his profession, the conviction that every face in the regiment looked upon him either with hate or with derision; and yet he felt that he, the beck and the jeer of the lowest, was in no wise less a gentleman than Colonel Pevensey himself,—since, though the accidents of life may give wealth and titles to some, gentle blood is gentle blood still, and the poor old squire, who, as far as words went, or could go, had always been a gentleman, had no cause to yield the palm to those who could, after all, be nothing more.

"A private!" he would say to himself, "a common soldier! what then? Privates have become generals ere now; some of the greenest laurels of renown have been planted by those who have risen from the ranks. I might rather ennoble than disgrace my ancient name, even as a private; but a deserter—oh! the infamy, the blot, that neither my own blood or my parents' tears could ever wash out!—the shame Violet would feel, that one who ever loved her could be a deserter! No, no! and yet, if death were my certain portion, oh, how I wish to die! But, perhaps they would not let me be so blest: a cruel mercy would save my life, to give me to the degradation of the lash! Away, away the dreadful thought of shame unutterable—I must—I will endure! I often feel as if disease had made a welcome progress—to die is not to desert—they dare not brand the brow of death—they dare not scourge the dead! Alas! my wretched mind wanders—the clock strikes; my tormentors awake; coarse joke, indecent jest, and cruel orders; wearing toil, and cruel punishments. The day begins—and these begin thee."

Valentine Woodville had persuaded himself that, though Colonel Pevensey, in his cold and unapproachable *hauteur*, scorned to feel any active enmity against a poor private in his regiment, yet as much dislike as tyrant could feel, or slave inspire, was betrayed in the scrutinizing glance the magnificent colonel always bestowed on the tallest and handsomest youth in the regiment.

Valentine Woodville's looks and manner betrayed, in consequence of this erroneous impression, as much defiance and contempt as eyes could convey, while the body was compelled to make a show of courtesy and subserviency. But, in spite of the provocation an angry and insolent air is to any superior, Colonel Pevensey's heart was full of pity for the poor, the proud, and almost heart-broken boy. The looks that seemed, to Valentine's excited fancy, those of cold and cruel scrutiny, were full of anxious interest. In the lofty and delicate beauty of the young private, in his large, sloping, and violet eyes, his hectic cheek, his auburn curls, and thorough-bred limbs, Colonel Pevensey traced a touching resemblance to the one idol, alike of the noble colonel and the miserable private, the beautiful Violet Woodville.

Again and again Colonel Pevensey formed a plan of sending for the young man, questioning him kindly on his health, his prospects, and his sorrows. He not only wished him to leave the regiment where he was at once so unpopular and so miserable, but would have used his interest to procure for him some appointment better suited to his gentle birth, his habits, and his health.

Again and again, the sullen defiance of Valentine's manner, and the suggestion of Symons that his courtesy would be misinterpreted and his kindness rejected, prevented what to Valentine might have been salvation. But when Colonel Pevensey had once made up his mind to marry Violet, he determined to postpone putting his kind intentions into effect till the day of their private nuptials was fixed, when he would appear to the young private in a less questionable and more generous light; and when, as the husband of his cousin, he could claim the privilege of assisting him, and exact his quitting the regiment (indispensable before the marriage, as his relationship to Violet made it) as a personal favour to himself.

The news of the dangerous illness of the popular young actress, Miss Violante Woodhurst, soon became generally known, and Valentine Woodville heard it with that sickening and spasmodic terror with which we hear of the first danger of the only thing we love.

It was conveyed to him by some fellow-soldiers who knew his secret as well as if he had written it on the wall; and who, in cruel sport and with pretended sympathy, but with private winks and nods and chuckles, gave him to understand that she was dead.

Even their callous hearts could not stand the sharp cry of agony unspeakable and the deadly faintness that came over the poor young private, as they conveyed their cruel information.

"No, no!" said one. "For shame, Jones; it's too bad. Cheer up, man," he said, putting his glass to Valentine's white lips, and fanning him with his military hat. "It's a joke, man, and a very bad one!"

"Thank you, thank you!" said poor Valentine; "bless you!" and he took the rough hands of his comforter in his own, and shook them heartily. "Thank you—she is not dead!"

"No, no! only a little indisposed, man; perhaps all a flam—"

"Thank you again and again," said Valentine, still shaking the private's hands; and then a wild laugh broke from him, and he burst into tears.

And not one man in all that mocking, gibing, jeering set, laughed at those tears,—for in the real agony of any human heart there is a something sacred and almost sublime; nay, more, the backs of several hands were drawn across the eyes of those who had never failed before to wink and mock at Valentine whenever they met him.

Valentine asked leave to absent himself that evening, and it was refused, through the malice of Sharpe acting on the ill-will of Captain Symons; but yet Valentine went, and the energy of true love and true sorrow prevailed, and he made his way to Violet's sick-room, and he saw her, and he heard that she was better, and she assured him she should soon be well. But he saw, at the same time, in spite of the gentle and meek affection of her manner, that he had no place in her love.

She received him with surprise indeed, but without emotion; often as he spoke he perceived that her attention wandered, that what was life or death to him was nothing to her; she seemed rather relieved when he rose to go, suffered him to kiss her tranquil cheek as a sister might have done,—and the kiss which made his blood ebb and flow, and his heart stand still, did not even tinge with the faintest blush the white rose of that cheek.

Miserable, moody, and almost mad, the wretched Valentine returned to the barracks, and to the degrading punishment devised for the irregularity and insubordination of his conduct! But solitary confinement and bread and water little affected one, the inward hell of whose bosom made him quite unmindful of outward discomfort; and on the whole he was glad to be alone, though in a dungeon, and to hide his bowed head and breaking heart from the eye of the stranger or the foe.

CHAPTER LV.

PEVENSEY'S LETTER.

VIOLET, though still pale and weak, and languid, was almost recovered, and Colonel Pevensey had seen her at her window; and he began to think it was time to redeem his pledge, and to ask her to fix a day for the union of their hearts, their hands, their lives!

It is true that reflection, and the influence of his Clarissa's meek fondness, and his boy's proud and demonstrative affection, had a little diminished the entire and rapturous devotion with which he had offered himself to poor Violet in the bower in the cliffs. But he was a man of feeling and of honour, in the worldly acceptance of the term, and had he pledged himself to a monarch's daughter he could not have held his plighted troth more certain or more sacred. But ever and anon, in the midst of his boy's boisterous caresses and his Clarissa's timid kisses, the thought that what he had resolved to do might darken their future, and embitter their present life, filled his father-heart with a vague self-reproach, and even terror, and he would clasp the boy wildly to his heart, and bury his face in Clarissa's bosom, and wish

that he had never seen Violet, or known how she loved him.

However, Colonel Pevensey was no wailing, dreaming sentimentalist, not a man to 'let I dare not wait upon I would,' or to do otherwise than nobly, promptly, and gracefully, what he felt, as a man of honour, he must do; and so he wrote to Violet the following letter, unconscious to himself that the acute and watchful apprehension of woman's love would show her that the sacrifice he meditated, whatever it might have been in the hurried rapture of the morning when he first proposed it, was now made far more to her love for him, than to his for her, and that honour and pity, rather than involuntary and passionate tenderness, would bring him to the altar beside her.

"MY BELOVED VIOLET,—I think it is now high time that I should redeem my pledge, and ask you to fix the day, which, by uniting our destinies for ever, will, I hope, clear away all clouds and storms from the atmosphere of your young life, and, I doubt not, make me the happiest of men.

"You must not imagine, dearest, that when I reflect on your unequalled loveliness, and oh! far better still, your unequalled love, I feel as if I were making any sacrifice in breaking through, for such a wife as Violet, the heartless but hereditary prejudices of my race, and the cold scruples of a world made up of formalities, of interest, and of ambition. Foremost as you are in genius, and in beauty, spotless in fame, and enthusiastic in affection, I feel sure that even an envious and malignant world will not attempt to dispute your right to all the homage and all the reverence my wife will be entitled to now,—and more still, when, in the natural course of probable events, I can place a coronet on a brow which nature seems to have designed for such a dignity. I know, my love, that in all the little etiquettes peculiar to a class (or if you will, a clique) you will suffer my experience to guide you, and you will not be offended, if I ask you to let our nuptials be strictly private, until I can break our marriage to some noble, but rather stiff-necked female relatives on whose reception of my angel girl her

position among the noble matronage of England will mainly depend.

"When they know that it is irremediable, they will, I trust, see the wisdom of cordiality.

"I now come, sweet Violet, to a subject much nearer my heart, and which, could anything have triumphed in my bosom over Violet's love, would perhaps have done so—I mean my children!

"They love me, Violet, with so jealous a love, and their happiness is so essential to my peace, that I need not invoke all your forbearance, all your gentleness, all the bewitching tenderness of your nature and your manners, on behalf of those who must know as a step-mother, till they have learnt to love you as a friend.

"How this is to be managed, sweetest, we will discuss together, if early to-morrow morning (should your strength suffice and the weather continue propitious) you will meet me in that spot where I first felt impelled to ask you to be mine for ever—the bower in the cliffs.

"Be not surprised, sweet Violet, if this letter seems rather serious and business-like, for a lover, asking his affianced to name the day on which he is to be so blessed!

"But what I have here endeavoured to convey, has long been working in my bosom, and as it is meant in all confidence and love, so I am sure you will receive it into the counsels of your kind heart, and sweet, feminine discretion.

"Bride of my choice! Angel of my life! and chosen *wife* of my bosom, I am ever, and *more than ever*,

"Your devoted

"HARCOURT PEVENSEY."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE HUMBLE FRIEND.

CAPTAIN SYMONS, by the close and constant watchfulness of a spy in his employment, had ascertained that Violet was convalescent; and anxiety lest Colonel Pevensy should discover his deception, impatient passion, and vile revenge, had worked together, in his bad heart and

subtle mind, into a plot, which was to throw Violet into his power, and leave her to his tender mercies.

There was a young actress of some merit and some pretensions to beauty, who, previous to the brilliant *début* of Violet, had been the chief attraction at the Brighton theatre, and had been in the habit, *faute de mieux*, of performing all the leading female parts, which, after Violet's triumphant success, were always awarded to her.

This girl, Miss Letitia Manners, as the play-bills announced her, though her real name was Dorcas Brown, a shrewd brunette, with black eyes, a Roxalana nose, good teeth, and a trim figure, was much better adapted to the *confidante*, the page, the *soubrette*, &c., than to the Juliets, the Desdemonas, the Paulines of the drama. She had talent, considerable imitative talent, but Violet had genius, original genius. Her success in the second walks of art was so much greater than any she had achieved in the first, that she seemed almost reconciled to a descent which was so like an elevation : " *Tel brille au second rang, qui s'eclipse au premier ;*" this was the case with Miss Letitia, and a sort of friendship, which showed itself in real kindness, confidence, and small pecuniary loans, on Violet's side, and in flattery, coaxings, and caresses on Letitia's, was established between these young girls.

Violet was gentle and dignified, though not without a considerable play of wit and fancy, and a bewitching archness of manner in her happier moods ; Letitia was pert, sprightly, coaxing, and flattering, and was never serious, without being sulky or cross.

Letitia, though she took much pains to preserve her reputation, was not, in reality, worthy to sit in Violet's presence : to *seem* and not to *be*, was the motto of the one—to *be* and not to *seem*, of the other. Captain Symons had been a lover of the sparkling Letitia, but even scandal had not discovered their intimacy.

In her heart, Letitia owed Violet many a grudge. She envied her her success as an actress, her fame as a beauty, her influence as an irreproachable woman—nay, unassuming, unprotected, and dependent as she was, as a lady too—but above all, was she jealous, burningly

jealous, of her influence over the mind of a man to whom she herself had vainly made every sacrifice, and who only looked upon her as a medium through whom he could win by stratagem, if not worse, the young girl who had never wasted a thought on him. As Letitia had been really and passionately in love with this bad and heartless man, and as, though she had known much folly, she had never known actual sin till she loved him, it is no marvel, that all the evil depths of a fallen woman's heart were stirred by his insolent inconstancy to her, and his base plan of obtaining her rival by her assistance.

And yet Captain Symons had, over the mind and actions of this unhappy girl, the despotic power a bad man always has over a still loving woman, whom he has degraded. She promised herself, it is true, that one day her revenge should be "sweeping and sure;" but in the meantime she did his bidding, and seemed to try, to the very utmost, to secure for him any object he confided to her cunning and dexterity.

It was then, by the information of this female spy, that Captain Symons was made aware of Violet's recovery; and though she had never gained enough on Violet's confidence, to induce the poor girl to reveal to her any of the secrets of her heart, yet her constant little coaxing attentions had won so much of Violet's regard—and even gratitude—that she had accepted an invitation, to go with Letitia, to spend a few days at a farm-house, belonging, she said, to an aunt of hers, who lived some ten miles from Brighton, and who would be delighted to receive the chosen friend of her beloved niece.

Violet, sighing, as the country-bred always sigh, for fresh air and green fields, accepted this invitation, with as much pleasure as she could feel in any arrangement in which the one she loved so wildly had no share. After her long and tedious confinement, in a close town room, after looking so long on nothing but squalid houses and a mean street, the thought of a thatched and pretty farm, such as Letitia described, emerald meadows, beehives, a rivulet, an old-fashioned flower-garden, with a sunny arbour; cows, with their sweet breath; cocks, with their cheering crow; poultry, with its merry cackle; home-made bread, new milk, cream, matchless butter, eggs, and

fruit—all this seemed delicious to Violet's country taste; and languid longing for a rustic life.

It was the very day that Violet received Colonel Pevensey's letter.

The reader knows the contents of that letter, he knows that therein the lover redeemed his pledge, and asked Violet to fix the day for their nuptials; and that he begged her to meet him at an early hour the next morning, at their trysting-place in the cliffs.

Will he be surprised to hear, that after the perusal of that letter, Violet shut herself for hours in her little bedroom, and that Patience, fearing that she might be ill, and looking through the keyhole to ascertain the fact, saw her kneeling by her bedside and sobbing convulsively; and that after hours spent thus, she came out calm and dejected, and with blistered cheeks and eyes swollen with weeping; and that then she sat down to her desk, and wrote long and earnestly, interrupted now and then by convulsive sobs and bursting tears, but that she *did* complete and fold and seal a letter she placed in her bosom?

And that then, while lying sadly musing on the sofa, a note came from Letitia Manners, proposing to call for her early the next morning in a fly to take her to her aunt's, and that in spite of Colonel Pevensey's appointment for the very same hour on the cliff, she acceded to Letitia's prayer, only naming a still earlier time than the one Letitia had fixed upon; and this being done, strange and inconsistent as it seems, Violet summoned Patience and made her promise, nay, even swear, when she was gone into the country with Miss Letitia Manners, not to let any entreaty, or bribe, or threat of Captain Symons's or of Colonel Pevensey's or of Valentine Woodville's or of Doctor Hegner's induce her to betray any knowledge of the place of her retreat or the manner of her departure.

And this being solemnly promised by the brave and true-hearted little maid-of-all-work, Violet lay down at her entreaty on the sofa she had placed by a bright fire, took some refreshment from Patience's hand, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER LVII.

A PROPOSAL.

WHEN Violet woke she found Patience watching her, with two letters which had been brought during her long and deep slumber.

One was in a strange and foreign-looking hand. It was from Dr. Hegner, and ran as follows :—

“BEAUTIFUL AND ADORABLE VIOLET,—I can no longer withhold the confession of feelings which tremble at my heart, burn in my glances, and almost burst from my lips, every time I feel the mystic enchantment of your presence. I love you, Violet! with the first ardent love of a young and enthusiastic nature, a warm and devoted heart. I know, fair and sublime creature, you have many, many admirers, but I believe you have only one true, loyal, and devoted lover—that lover is myself! I rise, dearest, for your sweet sake, above all mean and vulgar prejudices against the profession you adorn. Nay, more, since the illiberal exclusiveness of a clique, prevents the cordial welcome of new discoveries in medical science, and the appreciation of genius in the younger members of the faculty, I, convinced that my person, voice, and talents would secure success on the stage, and anxious to be ever at hand to protect my bride, intend, when we are married, to accept an engagement for myself.

“Oh the rapture of playing Romeo to your Juliet, Claude to your Pauline, and so on, through the whole range of the drama!

“It will not be *acting*, dearest,—it will be a sublime, an irresistible reality, which must lead to fame and fortune.

“I have little to offer, dearest, but a young and devoted heart, a person much overrated by the many, and which I never felt inclined to undervalue, till now that I would throw it at your feet—talents which good judges tell me must make me eminent, and that strong consciousness of desert and energy of will which are the great secrets of success.

“You, sweet Violet, have much the same to offer in

exchange, only that you want—what you will find in a union with me—confidence in your right to success, and resolution to obtain that right.

“We have both then, beauty, youth, genius—may I add love?”

“I will call to-morrow at noon, to hear you say, ‘Rinaldo, I am yours;’ and then with what rapture, oh, my Violet! shall I throw at your feet the poor but enchanted form of

“RINALDO HEGNER,
“Physician of the College of Heidelberg,
the Rhine.”

As Violet read, two or three times her colour rose, in evidence of pride wounded by this conceited and most tactless effusion; and now and then a smile played upon her lips, and broke into a laugh.

“I am glad,” she inwardly ejaculated, “that the egotistical and conceited pomposity of this proposal has taken from it all that an offer of marriage, to one so forlorn, might have had of affecting or of amiable. It is lucky he is so well satisfied with his own person, that after having seen my Pevensy he can still talk of his own beauty! The beauty of a low forehead, a showy nose, a retreating chin, long, tangled ringlets of a foxy hue, mingling with moustaches, whiskers, and a long beard of the same colour, but the whole dazzling to himself and the vulgar,—by the turquoise blue of his large, prominent eyes, the bright white and red of his doll-like complexion, and the ruby colour of his inexpressive mouth! His little figure, too, with his womanish waist! And he has seen Pevensy, and can yet believe in his own beauty! I feel no scruple, no compunction about him.”

Violet wrote—

“SIR,—I was very much surprised at the extraordinary and not very flattering tone of your letter, and it requires all my experience and recollection of the skill and kindness of the *doctor* to prevent my resenting the rudeness and audacity of the *man*.

“I beg to say at *once and for ever* that there are no circumstances in which I could be placed, that could induce me *for one moment* to listen to your proposal;

and that the only atonement you can make, for a startling confidence of success, so insulting to female dignity and reserve, is the never attempting to renew, in any way whatever, our recent intercourse.

"I enclose, with many thanks, a poor token of my sense of your medical services, and remain,

"Sir, yours, &c.,

"VIOLANTE WOODHURST."

Having dashed off this letter with the rapidity of excited feeling, Violet took up the other, ill-folded, ill-directed, and sealed with a thimble, the writing bad and blotted, and the spelling worse; yet it sent the blood from Violet's cheeks, and made her hand tremble, and her very knees shake.

It began thus:—

"A word to the wise! A frend in nede is a frend indeed! You are the wictim of a konspeerasy. If you go with L. M. you are undon. She is a snake in thee grarse, and a tule of a sartain Captain S. who owe you a grudg. She have no haunt, but she ave one to play the parte. If you falle into this snare you are dun for.

"So no more from your welwisher.

"I hates hanonumus letters, but dont dare put my name for fere of haccidents, and poor, and bred to hurn, can't hafford to make a henemy."

After perusing, and re-perusing this startling communication, Violet sat for some time lost in anxious thought.

This might be merely the hoax of some mischief-maker, or it might be the warning of some true and humble friend, who knew of the plot which might so well ensure her destruction. There were several young actresses, chorus and ballet girls, to whom Violet had been kind, according to her small means and opportunities; and there was one, a certain Lucy Blake, a poor consumptive girl, whom both Letitia and herself had employed in altering dresses, and in assisting them at their toilettes. This girl had often shown emotion at Violet's attentions, and Violet knew she had been lately staying at Letitia's lodging re-modelling dresses. It was possible that while there she might, if such a plot existed, have obtained

knowledge of it, and anxious at once to save Violet without exposing or endangering herself, had hit upon the expedient common to such minds in such cases, an anonymous letter.

The more Violet pondered on the probability of this solution, the more convinced did she become of its correctness, and at last her conviction became so strong that she resolved to act upon it. In order to do this the more easily, she was obliged to take little Patience partly into her counsels. It was at seven o'clock that Violet was to have met Colonel Pevensey on the cliffs—it was at six she had appointed Letitia Manners to call for her; but now she resolved to start for London by the train which left at four in the morning, and to ask shelter and protection of the Ordes, who had written to her kindly, once enclosing their address and a banknote for £10, in case of any emergency. This £10, yet untouched, was the thoughtful contribution of Miss Jenny, who, looking upon all men as ramping and roaring lions, “seeking whom they may devour,” was very anxious that the gifted and beautiful girl, in her dangerous position, and with her precarious profits, should never fall into a snare or a peril from which a few pounds might enable her to save herself. She had stipulated that Violet should keep this sum by her in case of any emergency, “brought about by the evil craft o’ wily and weeked mon.” Violet felt convinced that this *was* such an emergency, and that Miss Jenny would feel it such too.

And so Violet made up her mind; with Patience’s help she packed up what she felt indispensable to her comfort and respectable appearance, but left the bulk of her wardrobe behind her, the rooms being still hers till the end of the quarter.

She then wrote a few lines to Letitia, saying she was suddenly called away, but not saying why or where.

With many tears she confided to Patience her letter to Colonel Pevensey, to be given to him should he call to ascertain the reason of her not meeting him on the cliff; and if he did not call, to be taken to his house.

By the time all was packed and arranged, it was time to go to the station. Patience took Violet’s box in one and her basket in the other, and saw her secure

from cold and impertinence in a first-class carriage, in which she was the only passenger. And then the bell rang, the steam hissed, and Violet, as she kissed the little maid's cheek, felt as if she was parting with the only creature who really cared for her.

CHAPTER LVIII.

MAN'S LOVE.

It was with a strange mixture of feelings, that Colonel Pevensey prepared to keep his appointment with Violet in "the bower in the cliffs."

His darling Clariissa had been ill during the night. When he paid his wonted visit to her room, before retiring to his own, he found her restless and feverish; he sat up with her a great part of the night; and though she seemed better towards morning, yet his anxiety had renewed and re-established all her natural empire over his affection; and it had more than once occurred to him, that perhaps his darling's illness might be sent as a punishment to him for meditating the possible sacrifice of her happiness by giving her a step-mother; and the having suffered any less holy and pure affection to rival her in his heart.

These were unpropitious reflections for a bridegroom, about to meet, by his own entreaty, her who was to fix the day of their destiny; and the fond embrace he gave his darling child, before he went forth to meet Violet, the misgiving of his heart, and the tear of compunction he dashed from his eye, showed how much the father, at that moment, triumphed over the lover in his heart.

Colonel Pevensey, spoilt as he had been from his very earliest youth, by the attentions, the devotions, the *excesses de prévenances* of all womankind, felt surprised, piqued, and a little angry, to find himself *first* at the *rendezvous* he had appointed.

It was the first time this had ever happened to him, under any circumstances; and he grew indignant, as he watched and waited, in the grey, cold, and misty morning, to think that it was the humble girl, he was about to raise to the dignity of his wife, who was teaching him

the unpleasant lesson he had taught so many, that of watching and waiting. As, however, time went on, and the Brighton clocks struck eight, anxiety about Violet's health began to usurp the place of anger and revenge.

He remembered the constant devotion, the tenderness, the loyalty, the self-abnegation of Violet's character, and as he did so, he felt ashamed of his anger, still more so of his revenge, and grew seriously alarmed about her health—convinced, by reflection, that it must be some very serious cause indeed, that could induce Violet to disappoint him. Directly he became convinced of this, he felt his heart grow sick with the revulsion of his feelings. Violet, whom he had been inwardly reviling as fickle, inconstant, perhaps even false, he now invoked, by every tender epithet that anxious love could suggest; and, unable any longer to endure suspense, he rushed from the place of *rendezvous*, to the late abode of poor Violet.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE LATE REMORSE OF LOVE.

By the time Colonel Pevensey had reached Violet's door, he had repented of every wrong he had done her, even in thought: he had accused himself of an ungrateful, a faithless, a vacillating, a grudging spirit; his children had dwindled in size, and faded in hue, on his mental horizon, as the figure of Violet, in all her love, her timid, yet impassioned love, her feminine devotion, and her childlike faith and trust, appeared in the foreground. As with a trembling hand he touched the knocker, "the late remorse of love" filled his heart.

But his emotions could not be easily analyzed, when Patience gently told him that Miss Woodhurst was gone, she knew not whither; and a sort of half-superstitious conviction that he had, by underrating her sublime affection, both lost it, and, worse still, deserved to lose it, and a vague terror, and a miserable sense of desertion, of loneliness, and of desolation, blanched his cheek and trembled at his heart.

However, she was gone; and nothing could elicit from the faithful little Patience any information on the

subject; indeed, so adroit was she already in the grand *ruse* of her wretched class, that of affecting a dense and impassable stupidity, that Colonel Pevensey believed her the dolt and dullard she so cleverly contrived to appear, and taking, with many misgivings, the letter he dreaded to open, even before the *child-of-all-work*, he slowly and mournfully departed.

Before he had proceeded far, however, he felt anxious to know at what hour Violet had gone out, and returning to ascertain that point, and the street-door being ajar, he knocked and entered simultaneously. He felt certain, although the door of the little sitting-room was immediately closed, that he had seen Symons's figure standing against the mantel-piece, and heard his voice, in angry and interrogative conversation with little Patience, whose tones seemed not to be the meek and gentle ones she had used to him, but those of a sullen and dogged resolution, and even sauciness.

At this moment Colonel Pevensey so longed to be alone, and shrank so especially from any remarks of Symons's about Violet, that he was as anxious not to appear to see, as the captain was not to be seen.

But after vainly trying to elicit from Patience the hour of Violet's departure, he did ask her how long Captain Symons had been there, and was surprised when she pettishly answered that he had been worritting and hindering her for an hour or more, to make her tell what she really did not know.

As she spoke, it struck Colonel Pevensey for the first time that perhaps he had a rival in Symons, and that Violet's mysterious departure might be connected with the impertinent intrusion of the very man he had first so rashly authorized to annoy her. There was some comfort to his heart even in this distressing solution of the enigma of her conduct. It would solace him to think she fled from anything rather than him and his love. He seemed to forget while speculating on this mystery that he held in his hand what would explain all; but who that has loved can marvel at his procrastination, or doubt that he required solitude and reflection to nerve him to break the seal of what seemed to him now like a sentence of death or a sweet reprieve?

Poor Patience had had a troublesome time of it, with all the exasperated and disappointed worshippers of one who, like all women who unite personal loveliness with genius, grace, and feeling, never appeared but she interested the hearts of men, never smiled but she won a permanent empire over their minds.

Captain Symons, baffled, foiled, outwitted in his base and long-projected scheme for ruining her spotless fame, and perhaps her right to that fame, and not even enlightened as to the cause of her flight—ignorant as to whether any suspicion of him had been excited, or any treachery of Letitia's been at work, felt a degree of venomous wrath, which he could only vent on the miserable victim whom he had degraded into a slave of his vices. From what Patience told him, he learnt that Colonel Pevensey had seen him, and he felt that some explanation was necessary. It gave him little trouble to invent what he thought would satisfy the colonel, and by degrading Violet in the opinion of him she loved, revenge him in some degree on her. Having resolved on this, with a few hearty curses launched on the shock head of poor Patience, and with a shove that would have upset any less wiry and less sturdy little menial, Captain Symons took his leave.

He had not been gone long when Dr. Hegner, his hair, his moustache, and his *jeune France*, all on end with alarm, rushed, armed with a pistol and a German knife concealed under a Spanish cloak, to terrify Violet into accepting his proposal. When he found she was gone, and all the tragedy he had rehearsed of no avail, he swore that unless Patience told him whither she had fled, he would shoot himself before her eyes, and this melo-dramatic threat only exciting a titter, he presented the pistol at her own head, and said:—

"Tell me all, or I fire!"

Patience, not much frightened, but still uncertain how much of the doctor's spirit was the "mountebank's, and how much the bravo's," said:—

"Well, put up your pistols, and I will tell you all I know."

"Well, there, I have put them up."

"Oh! but I am so afraid, unless you put them quite away I cannot think of all she told me."

"Well, there, I will put them in that closet."

Patience locked it, and put the key in her bosom.

"All I know is, that Miss Woodhurst went away at four o'clock this morning because she had so many *suitors*, and not one, as she said, as would *suit*. Says she, 'Patience,' says she, 'too many lovers will puzzle a maid, and so I'm off for 'Merica. I'll go,' says she, 'where I aint know'd, and then, perhaps, I shan't have to stoop to pick up nothing.' There's her words, as near as may be; but where 'Merica is I aint schollard or geograprer enough to say; but if you wants to find her, it's to 'Merica you must go."

Nothing could have more completely bewildered and bamboozled the young doctor than this absurd invention. His mood changed to a sullen despair and moody revenge, and he insisted on having back his weapons. Patience would not give him the key till she was safely esconced in her own room, and then she threw it into the little garden for him; he took it, and angrily departed.

He was scarcely gone when pale, haggard, and wild-looking, poor Valentine Woodville showed himself at the door; Patience felt very kindly towards the very handsome and miserable young soldier: not even for him would she betray Violet's confidence, but to comfort him, in the way her woman instinct taught her would be most acceptable to his wounded and devoted heart, she told him that Miss Woodhurst, to her thinking, was not gone far, but was driven away by the persecutions of the doctor, the colonel, and the captain, not one of whom she could abide, and who left her no peace of her life. Patience ventured on a lie, which, if any such could deserve the epithet of *white*, might, from its charitable motive, have claimed it; for she said that Miss Woodhurst had left her love for her cousin, and that he should hear of her, or from her, if she could contrive it, before long. Patience had of course never loved herself, or she would have known how much more bitter (in the result) to a passionate lover is false hope than even despair itself. She saw tears of surprise and joy sparkle in the young soldier's fine eyes, she saw a hectic of delight flush his pale cheek, a nervous quiver of rapture pass through his frame, and his hands clasp each other, in an involuntary

ecstasy of self-congratulation ; and so, as Patience saw him going on his way rejoicing, he who generally showed dejection and despair in his very step, she said to herself :—

“Poor young feller! He is worth all of ’em put together! There’s true love, if you like! I’m as glad as a bird to have made him smile; and if I didn’t do another stroke all day, I should think I’d done a good day’s work by that—so I should.”

CHAPTER LX.

THE SACRIFICE.

COLONEL PEVENSEY, as soon as he reached his house, hastened to his dressing-room, bolted the door, threw himself into an easy chair, which, however, he found a bed of thorns—those sharpest thorns, suspense and self-reproach; and he was just nerving himself to break open Violet’s letter, when a low knock at the door, repeated more than once, roused his impatient spirit, and he angrily observed—

“I am engaged; I can see no one.”

No answer was returned, but he thought he heard a little step steal away, and something like a sob. All the father rushed into his heart as he hurried to the door, and gently opened it, and there, seated on the stairs, her face buried in her delicate little hands, and her torrents of golden hair hiding both, sat little Clarissa, like the Peri at the gates of Paradise.

She did not hear her father’s approach, nor knew he was near, till he took her in his arms, and carried her into his room; and then forcing open the little white and taper fingers she still held tightly interlaced before her eyes, he saw that she was very pale, and had been weeping bitterly.

There is something inexpressibly touching in silent grief and noiseless sorrow, in any one; but in a child, a being generally so clamorous, so thoughtlessly demonstrative in all its emotions, self ever uppermost in love or hate, there is a something that excites the liveliest

sympathy, because it betrays a tenderness as precocious as it is fatal.

"Silly, silly Clarissa," said her father, kissing away her tears, and clasping her closely to him; "why did you cry, my darling?"

"Oh, I did not mean my own papa should see my silly tears; but you went out without kissing me; and just now you came home without even looking into the school-room, though I had got something to surprise you ready; and when I came and knocked, you seemed so angry."

And Clarissa, at the catalogue of her griefs, burst out afresh in tears and sobs.

At this moment, and while her father was trying all methods, orthodox and unorthodox, to comfort and cheer her, a succession of shrill unearthly yells proceeded from a trumpet, accompanied by a drum, both instruments betraying the near approach of Marmaduke, and the preparatory flourishes rose louder and louder, till the boy, the drum slung round his waist, and beating it furiously with one hand, while with the other he held the trumpet to his mouth, rushed into the room, and bounding on his papa's knee, tried at once to hurl his sister down and to establish himself there.

"So," he said, "I'm glad I've found you out, Miss Sneak. Papa, she stole away as quiet as a mouse, though she knew dinner was ready, just to come and coax and cant you over. But Miss Sharpe says, I'm to ask you to let her come down directly—what's she been crying about?—that little cut I gave her with my whip, half fun and half accident."

"Hush, Marmy, dear," said Clarissa, in a whisper, as Colonel Pevensy's thoughts again wandered to poor Violet. "Papa knows nothing about it—see, I have put on my polka to hide it—it would make him very angry with you, so I wouldn't let him see it for the world!"

"Well, you're not such a sneak after all," said the boy. "You're very brave, considering you're only a girl; so, come, let's invite papa to tea in the school-room, as we agreed; and now, come down to dinner, and for hiding your arm, I forgive you for being a girl, and I

love you almost as if you were a boy. Papa, what Clarissa came for, was to ask you to come to tea in the schoolroom. Miss Sharpe says, we've been so good, we may have our little French tea-things that Lady Douglas gave us, and we've saved all our money for a feast. Will you come, papa, at five?"

"Yes, darlings, I will; so now, go quickly down to dinner, like good children, and at five I'll come to the feast. Bless you, my angel girl—come, be off, my noble boy."

And with the happy elasticity of childhood, beautiful little Clarissa, after one fond and protracted hug of her papa, shared with a more boisterous embrace of Marmy's, threw her arm round the boy's neck, smiled an April smile, which her father scarcely noticed, and tripped gaily down-stairs, to help her noisy and elated brother to put the finishing strokes to the feast, at which papa was to be entertained.

Colonel Pevensy, now alone, and secure from intrusion, held the letter open before his eyes, and read the first few lines with an emotion which, when reflection succeeded to feeling, amazed even himself.

CHAPTER LXI.

VIOLET'S LETTER.

"HARCOURT, dearest, kindest, best!—Harcourt, sole object of a love too deep for words, farewell! farewell for ever! For ever? no!—only the brief for ever of this cold world of forms and symbols! Even in this hour of more than mortal struggle, and of bitterness to which death were a pleasing boon, I feel that there is a for ever beyond the grave, and which those who have loved, with true, unselfish love, on earth, shall share together.

"Dearest, you will smile, for you will not believe!—yes, I fancy I see your own ineffable, enchanting smile, disputing with the soft tears that *will* gather in those heavenly eyes, whose earnest softness haunts me as I write, leading me (ignis-fatuus-like) from my stern resolve, and almost forcing me, a weeping slave, to your

feet, ready to accept the great, great sacrifice you proffer, instead of making, as I will and do, a greater far.

"Ah, little did you deem, my love, for so I must call you, for the first and last time, little did you deem, when, in the self-abnegation, the noble enthusiasm, of the moment you proffered to the humble girl the sacrifice of all that has influenced you through life—little did you deem, adored one! that in the loving heart of that poor maid, there was a heroism greater than your own—a sacrifice which He who reads the heart, and He alone, can recognise, as the greatest love ever made to love.

"You would make me your wife, Harcourt—you, so proud, so susceptible of opinion, so open (forgive me) to the despotism of a sneer—you would make the poor actress, so far, so very far beneath you, in the world's harsh judgment, though gentle blood with all true dignity flows in her veins, too—you would not make her merely the secluded wife of your bosom, but the ostensible partner of your proud fortunes—those fortunes which you ask her to share just as they are reaching the summit of their glory and your ambition. And you construed into an acquiescence, whose delight could find no words to translate it, but which tears and blushes revealed too vividly, the silence of your Violet! Dearest, as you spoke, a heroism greater than yours, because it springs from a love, alas! far greater than your own, arose in my heart, and at that hour of rapture, of pride, of glory (for it is glory to know you think me worthy to be your wife), all that is devoted, and good, and true within me answered 'no.'

"No, dearest, no; for my heart, even then, foretold what your letter has so fully confirmed, that the sacrifice you meditated, and which I knew you would make, you made to my love, *not your own*. Pity, pity, beloved and noblest of men! pity for *me* urges the sacrifice of all you have held dear and sacred through life.

"But no, dearest, no; and yet it is not pride that makes me say, while my tears fall like rain, *I will never, never be your wife*. It is not pride, it is love—love which looks beyond the bewildering enticements of the moment, and sees you sad, regretful, perhaps remorseful even, with Violet by your side—and calm, and hap-

and contented, with Violet forgotten and far away. *Your children, beloved, suffice to your heart*, which, but for the unhappy discovery of my unhappy love, would have sought no tenderness but theirs.

"Farewell—tears will blot that bitter word. Oh, of what unspeakable anguish may one word be the token!

"Fear not for me, my kindest, dearest one! at least fear not that, humbled, sobered, and, alas! convinced by your last letter, I can never again allow wounded pride, and love despised, to rouse misery to madness. It was the frenzy of a moment, Harcourt, not the deliberate choice of a mind, which, when itself, recognises the right of Him who is a jealous God, to chasten and to humble to the dust her who has made an idol, and has worshipped it.

"No, dearest, I would not embitter by one sad thought of me, one feeling of regret, perhaps remorse, the calm and happy future which awaits you, and of which I know the chief delight will be, to make your darlings fit to adorn the lofty situation to which your new rank will raise them.

"It is the quiet sacrifice that proves a woman's love. I loved you less when madly I prepared to die for you, than now that for you I have resolved to live, and not to live a life whose dejected misery would be a reproach to your kind nature, your bright and happy existence. No, though the avenging deluge overwhelms my heart at this moment, yet in due time the storms shall cease, the waters shall abate, and the dry land appear: not that bright fairy-land of roseate bowers, and silvery fountains, and glad birds, which first love brings as his portion to the young heart that welcomes him; but a land which, barren, or fruitful only in weeds, dark, rocky, and of little promise, is not all ungrateful for watchful care and earnest labour; for immortal flowers, Harcourt, have been sown and reared in that garden of the broken-hearted, which rises out of the deluge of the passions.

"I mean, then, dearest, not to yield to a selfish and sinful despair, but to struggle for peace, and in active employment to find forgetfulness. I speak of the future, if I am not kindly spared that long, long gloom, the future seems to me now. At present my heart scarcely

believes in the prophecy of my reason, that I shall ever feel any interest in aught but you. No, life seems, as it ever has done since I knew you, divided into the Eden where you are, and the wilderness where you are not; and that Eden I leave—leave weeping and yet consenting, led by those angels of the heart of woman—love, that can sacrifice self, and loyalty, that can glory in that sacrifice!

“Do not seek to discover my retreat—do not contend with the good angel that urges me away, lest I prove but a weak woman after all! Beware of Captain Symons—he is *not* your friend; and I have narrowly escaped a subtle snare spread by him, who, in his wretched vanity, presumes to think that she who has adored you, who adores still, could waste one thought on him. Beware of him! Ah, how I tremble when I think, that in sacrificing myself, I sacrifice the right of watching over you, of shielding you from all evil, of protecting you—smile, proud and dignified Harcourt, when the poor Violet talks of protecting *you*! And yet there *is* a shelter, a protection in the bosom of a woman who really loves, and in her bosom alone, which man, however lofty, however gifted, can never find elsewhere.

“It is all I could conceive of happiness, beloved! to be the guardian spirit of your home, and watch that nothing treacherous or harsh, or false, or cruel, ever approached, not merely the sanctuary of your affections, but even of your fancy—and this happiness I resign. But were I the empress of the earth instead your poor Violet, ah, dearest, what tears of pride and joy would replace these drops of bitter anguish—ah, then the bridal wreath you proffer, how proudly should I wear it! Ah, what a magic circle then were the ring I now reject! and what tears of rapture and blushes of tenderness would the bridal veil conceal from all eyes but yours!

“From this dream I must tear myself to the harsh reality of sternest duty—from what *might* be, to what *is*. Harcourt! angel of this dark and troublous world—farewell—Oh, God! farewell for ever!

“VIOLET.”

A thousand wild emotions succeeded each other

through Colonel Pevensey's heart as he read this letter ; but love and enthusiastic admiration of Violet, and hate and scorn of himself, predominated. He blushed—yes ! the man of fashion, and of the world, so many years the idol of women, and the envy of men, blushed, alone, in his own room, as he compared himself, not merely with the idol of her own creation, which Violet had made and invested with his form, but with Violet herself, the humble and yet the truly great.

And this was the woman to whom, while passion and gratified vanity, and a misplaced pity, induced him to offer his hand, a niggard and worldly spirit had grudged what was in reality so unworthy of her. And he had been cold and mean enough to let her trace the paltry pride of his heart in the very letter in which he asked her to secure to him for ever the solace of her presence, and the blessing of her love !

And that cold, thankless letter had lost him Violet, and, worse, had robbed him of the best and noblest privilege that wealth and rank possess—that of showering all their blessings upon, and surrounding with all their immunities, one whom nature had fitted to adorn the loftiest station, but whom fortune had actually thrown on daily toil for daily bread. “She is gone in sorrow, in poverty, perhaps in want !” he groaned ; “and but for my cold heart and niggard spirit, she might have been secured for ever from all the miseries of dependence, from all the perils and labours of her unhappy profession. In wealth and comfort, admired by millions and adored by one, shedding dignity on rank, and lustre on a coronet, a sweet model for *Clarissa* of all that makes woman great and dear, and a kind fond mother to my boy—ah, how happy, how brightly happy might we all have been ! And now—embittered by regret, perhaps remorse, bowed by shame, and pining for a love I can never again awaken—for no other could feel such love—even my children will painfully remind me of the mistaken sacrifice I made to them, and every luxury will be embittered, when I think how it might have been at once shared and enhanced. But I will find her yet, and compel her to be mine ! Come, there is no despair for him who has an object in view, and that object one that shall make this

dreary earth a paradise—to that I devote my every thought. To find her and to make her mine for ever, there is my hope, my ambition, my glory!”

Oh man! man! how often is it thus! How prone to disparage and resign what you even think you have won! The wildest and deepest sigh of your hearts is ever breathed for the unattainable.

As Colonel Pevensey was hastening down-stairs to return to Violet's late abode in the hope of eliciting some hint from Patience as to her retreat, he met Symons, who came jauntily up-stairs, with the falsehoods he had coined trembling in his averted eyes and on his treacherous lips. Colonel Pevensey's manner was unusually cold and haughty.

They stood on the landing—a singular contrast—the colonel so tall and stately, with the air of a Norman knight, and the flashing eye, curved lip, and proud features of a Plantagenet; and Captain Symons, small and slight, with an innate meanness no military training could dignify, with a pug nose, an adder's forehead, prominent light eyes with white lashes, thick lips, and a retreating chin, and yet with a restless air of coxcombry and personal vanity, often seen in the plainest and most insignificant of men.

“Colonel,” he said, and tears of plausibility filled his light eyes, “I have a confession to make—Violet Woodhurst did *not* go where I, believing she was going, said she did. She shammed illness, hoping no doubt to work on your pity; and I was so afraid the sly little baggage might influence your noble mind and generous heart, I didn't dare to undeceive you. I see you are angry, but my regard for you, colonel, my gratitude, my attachment (proud and humble too), must be my excuse; I hoped the end would sanctify the means—and if I have prevented your throwing yourself away—”

“You need not trouble yourself to take care of me, Captain Symons; I can do that myself. Truth is the only thing I value in man!”

“And woman; I know it, and therefore have risked your displeasure, to save you from the wiles of the very falsest of her sex,”

“On what do you build that accusation?” asked

Colonel Pevensey, trembling with excitement, and growing white with suppressed indignation.

"Oh, on many things! Finding you had slipped out of the noose, she's been throwing it round a young doctor, who attended her in this pretended illness, and even round your humble servant; I told you *elle se consolera*, and if you knew all, you would say I spoke truly."

"And where is she now?"

"Come, come, that's hardly fair; but if you'll forgive me a pious fraud—for really, though I do think her a pretty girl, and an amusing little baggage too, my part in the affair has been dictated far more by love for *you* than for *her*, yet, if you'll shake hands with me after, I'll tell you all about it and her. What should you say, if, finding, as I said, the great, handsome, and all but peer of a colonel was *no go*, she were awaiting the little captain in a cottage only a few miles off, perilling the the name of Miss Woodville, in the vain hope of returning with that of Mrs. Symons."

"I should say," exclaimed Colonel Pevensey, with flashing eyes, and lips white with passion, "that the man who so belies her is a coward, a slanderer, and a liar."

"Colonel Pevensey! you presume on your position to insult—"

"I presume on nothing but the position that the knowledge of the truth gives any man over him who foully and wilfully lies! You have never deceived me; and in slandering Miss Woodville, you are slandering one whom I have courted as my wife, and who, but for her own high-minded and resolute refusal, would now be here in a character and with a name to which she would lend more dignity than she could ever borrow from it. I rejected her love once, and through you—meet ambassador on so paltry an errand;—rejected it, in the mean pride of the prejudices of a clique, and the low vanity of ambition. For that jewel of the world, that jewel once cast before me, I have since knelt in vain: SHE, IN HER TURN, HAS REJECTED ME—but in the pride of a virtue and a self-sacrifice, which makes the noblest among men seem unworthy, and you—the foul traducer of a virtue

you cannot comprehend—how mean! how base! how grovelling! Go! I command you, go! Go, before I yield to an impulse I can scarcely restrain, and sully the hand of a man of honour by contact with a liar and a coward. Go, but beware how you ever venture again to traduce her whom I have sworn to win as my wife—if there is power in perseverance and devotion to conquer so just a pride as hers. Go, give not utterance to the new lies that tremble on your lips. Go, before I fling you from me like the reptile you resemble. Go!”

And Symons thought it wise to go, and to go quickly, as he saw the colonel's passion urging him beyond his self-control, and beheld him approaching the corner into which he had shrunk.

Rapidly Captain Symons sped down-stairs, and Colonel Pevensey, after hastily walking two or three times up and down the corridor, and suddenly seizing his hat and cloak, left the house.

And his children, who, with their little tea-things and their tiny feast ready, and showily set out to make the most of it, had been waiting for him with childish impatience for half an hour (which to them seemed half a day) heard the door close after him, and Clarissa exclaimed—
“Papa has forgotten us after all.”

CHAPTER LXII.

MISS JENNY AND THE DONS.

TURN away, turn away from the dark picture of disappointed love—leave Colonel Pevensey to mourn that he has driven from his side (unwittingly, but yet how surely) that angel of life, an unselfish, a devoted woman—and hasten where happy love, in his roseate dawn, is tinting alike the old halls, the monastic haunts, the time-worn cloisters, and the hoary chapels, the bright green of the beautiful trees of Oxford, and the silver ripples of the classic Isis, with the purple light of love.

Jeannetta and her intended glide hand in hand through the region of the past, and cling more closely to each other, while they trace written on all things, “passing away.” To solemn shrines, each haunted by a memory,

they bring the smile of hope and love; but all their object seems to be to see nothing, hear nothing, but each other; they care not who founded this college, who built that chapel; they are not seeking *truth* but *illusion*. In the colleges they care only for the nooks and niches where they can whisper apart—the aisles in which they can lose themselves and their party.

And what marvel! They are all the world to each other; their wedding-day is fixed; they are revelling in the last days of COURTSHIP. Golden dream! fairy-land of the heart! the brief Eden of life! how little does it prepare woman for all the stern realities of WEDLOCK! at least where she has chosen, as so many do, for qualities that dazzle rather than endure, and has not taken care that he who worships her as a *LOVER* shall be rich in all those Christian graces which will make him cherish her as a *HUSBAND*, love her even when he has nothing to fear, and treat her with all courtesy and tenderness even when the gloss of novelty is gone from the cheek of love.

And Gerard Esdaile! from the ashes of his wild boyish passion for Jeannetta, has sprung that phoenix, a rational but tender affection for Rosalie—an affection based upon a thorough knowledge of her true and noble heart—a thorough appreciation of her gentle and unselfish nature—a true estimate of, and respect for, her quick, *naïve*, but truly feminine intellect.

Any one who loved Rosalie at all must love her very fondly; she was of so endearing a nature—of so bewitchingly sweet and sprightly a temper! so very pretty, without ever thinking, or at least appearing to think, about her prettiness—no vanity, no affectation—the same at a court ball, at Almack's, at home, or at a village festival, or cottage fireside. "*Osez partout être vous-même,*" was a golden maxim she acted upon, without perhaps ever having heard it, or thought about it.

In truth, the secret of her peculiar charm lay in the fact that "she never thought about herself at all." Therefore she was never striving to seem handsomer, or better, or brighter, or more clever, or more exclusive, or more lofty, than she was.

She was as much at her ease, though naturally and exquisitely polite to all, when *THE DUKE*, struck by her

manner and her appearance, begged to be introduced to her, and chatted at least an hour with her, and gave a ball in her honour, as she was at her own fireside, of which she was the life and joy—or in her little village school, of which she was the idol—or in some cottage home, where her presence was a very sunbeam—or talking to all the dons of Oxford, who, thinking of themselves and their importance, their dignity and their condescension, were stiff, constrained, and ill at ease, as all who think about themselves are,—and coloured up, and looked down, and stammered, and hesitated. Yes, she answered their stiff queries with cheerful grace, and replied to their somewhat antique jokes and classic puns with a ready wit, which might have taught them that natural quickness of perception can make woman a match, in conversation at least, for man, with all the classics to quote from, logic to give weight, and mathematics precision to his discourse.

And Dr. Esdaile was of the party—dear old Dr. Esdaile—whom Rosalie wept with joy to see again, and whom even Mrs. Orde and Jeannetta, the one somewhat past the age of enthusiasm, and the other pre-occupied and engrossed, could not behold without a soft emotion and a lively joy.

Dr. Esdaile was that delightful being, an unselfish old man. Deeply learned, without pedantry—dignified, without pride—religious, without ostentation, and with a simplicity unmixed with weakness.

He was a very fine and very handsome man for his years, and he took a little endearing and natural pride in what he himself had been known to designate a fine man.

Time had stolen every chestnut lock that once so many fair ones coveted in vain; but the *loss* was in some respect *gain*, for the white and polished head displayed all the moral and intellectual organs grandly developed, and the silvery curls that clustered round the ears were soft and shining as a child's. Eyes black and soft and brilliant flashed beneath his white eyebrows; his complexion was rubicund—for he liked, in moderation, the rosy wine; and his kind smile revealed a still fine set of white teeth; he was very tall, and very portly, proud of a fine leg and

foot, which black silk stockings, &c., displayed to advantage; and his white and graceful hand was a perfect model for a sculptor.

He dressed a little in the clerical style of the past, wore buckles in his shoes, and a three-cornered hat; but he was a prebend of the cathedral of —, and therefore his assumption of dignity was not out of place.

It was delightful to him to find himself in all the haunts of his youth, and in the very rooms he had occupied some five-and-forty years before.

Between Dr. Esdaile and Miss Jenny there was a perpetual war, because Dr. Esdaile, though acknowledging all that he considered the just claims of woman, would not admit her supremacy and man's inferiority.

As nothing daunted Miss Jenny, so she did not fear to broach her own peculiar doctrines in the presence of the very dons themselves, while condescendingly partaking of the splendid hospitalities of their high tables.

On one occasion, after a somewhat lengthened grace, in which the virtues of the pious founders of the college were dwelt upon, and the names of their noble dames either hurriedly mentioned, or omitted altogether, Miss Jenny, bridling and colouring, angrily exclaimed to the provost, who was more disposed for a good dinner than an intellectual discussion:—

“I marvel mooch, provost, thot in the vary strang-hauld o' larning, ond I troost o' releegion, the grond princeeples o' joostice are sae leetle ottended too. Ye mak' sair leeght o' yer obleegations to woman, provost; and yet a' history, and a' experience proves, that in a' gude warks, woman is ever foremost. I pass by the thirst o' knowledge, sae remarkable in the mither o' the race, Eve hersel'; her intellectual ombition, sa weel contrasted wi' the easy, uninquiring, dull content o' Adom—a content thot hod nathing o' vartue in it, since vartue, provost, conseests in the pooer o' resisting temptation, ond he thot has never been tempted canna be said to hae resisted;—I pass by the first great proof o' woman's intellectual superiority, doctor, because I ken fu' weel, thot it is the fashion amang divines to dwell mair on her moral delinquency thon her mental superiority; but—”

“Why, madam, allow me to say, with all due deference,

that since, to our first mother's credulity, vanity, and (forgive me) greediness, we owe the loss of Paradise—since ignorance *was* bliss till her folly made us wise to our ruin—we cannot be very grateful for a curiosity which, I fear, had more of moral weakness than of mental energy, and which has made us all the short-sighted, miserable mortals we are."

"Ye tak' a vary pecooliar view, provost, o' Eve's choracter, I'm theenking: for moral ond mental defeeciency see Adom—Adom always seemed to my mind a puir, shallow-pated, narrow-hearted cooard—an' wha would 'let I daur na wait upon I would'—wha could follow, but could na' lead; ond when Eve hod plucked the fruit ond tasted, could imitate but not oreeginate, ond then turn round on her ond say 'The woman tempted me, and I did eat!'"

"Well, madam, this animated and novel discussion must not prevent our eating, and, I hope, drinking too. What wine may I have the pleasure of giving you?"

"Hock! if you please—but we, doctor, we women, freevolous, as it's the fashion to ca' us, we care far mair for the feast o' reason and the flow o' soul than for a' the cookery o' France, or the vintage o' Spain!"

The doctor bowed; his tastes and Miss Jenny's did not coincide; the discussion of a capital *vol-à-vent* interested him just then much more than that of Adam and Eve.

On the other side of Miss Jenny sat her old opponent, Dr. Esdaile: Miss Jenny commenced an attack upon him.

"A penny for yer thoughts, Dr. Esdaile."

"They're scarce worth the money, madam."

"Were they, as usual, derogatory to 'our sex, doctor, I'd say Amen."

"Nay, madam, they were not derogatory, they were only just. I was thinking that woman, all lovely and gifted as she is, occupies a certain place in the creation, and that while she keeps that place—"

"Weel, sir, ond that place is the foremost place."

"Nay, madam, to man the foremost, and to woman the next."

"What, sir, not even on an equality with the tyrant?"

Come, sir, you would suit New Zealand better than our enlightened country, where mon, hideous brute that he is there, breaks the female's forefingers, and knocks out her front teeth, in token of his power and her subjection—where she performs all the toils he has neither the will nor the art to effect—where he chuses his bride by spitting in her face, and where her first office in her bridal home is to hew wood, to draw water, and to serve her bloated, loathsome master on her knees."

"Nay, madam, you wrong me: I would give all honour to the woman as to the weaker vessel."

"The weaker vessel, doctor, may be; but with the stronger spirit in her, as I believe you, some of you, discover to your cost. Look at all time, all history, ancient and modern, sacred and profane—I ha' proved, I think," she said, bridling as she proudly glanced round the table, "how vastly superior Eve was to Adam."

"Very unorthodox sentiments!" muttered the old don—"something quite new this!" But something newer, in the shape of a capital dish, arrested his attention; and Miss Jenny proceeded:—

"I pass by mony ither bright potterns o' female excellence, and I come to the very Father o' the Faithfu' himsel', and I ask ye a', divines, and scholars, and theologians, how in their early morried life would Abraham ha' fared but for the beauty, the discretion, and the virtue o' Sarah his wife; and what sort o' recompense was hers—she, whose rare beauty and merit hod saved his life, and made his fortune, when she saw her hondmaid preferred before her, and the son o' that hondmaid, even Hagar the bondwoman, flouting at her—"

"Nay, but, my dear lady, you do not clearly distinguish what was typical in—"

"Teepical, sir, a' was teepical o' woman's merit and woman's reward—to be loved while youth and beauty lasted—made useful while tolent and energy endured—and then to be forsaken, insulted, forgotten! But I forget mysel' to talk o' woman, where mon glories in his contempt for, and his independence of her."

"Nay, madam," said one of the dons, "there is no place in the world where woman is held in greater reverence than in Oxford."

"I am glod to hear you say so, sir—I suld be mair glad could I perceive ony evidence o' that reverence—when I remember that the first noble sang on record was the sang o' Deborah the prophetess ond the poetess—when I remember it was aye woman's heavenly pity saved the life o' mon—when I think o' the Queen o' Sheba in all her magnificence—when I ponder on the sublime simplicity o' the devoted Ruth—and when I think that the chority which is the model o' all time was the chority o' that puir widow wha cast in a' that she hod; and when I hasten on fra' the records o' the Auld Testament to those o' the New, and see even amang a fause and idolatrous people that a virgin was found pure eno' to be the mither o' our Lord—when I mark how women followed and believed, and how Magdalen wept at His feet—when I see who were 'first at the sepulchre,' and ever first in all gude works in the olden time as now,—I glory in my ain sex, ond challenge ye, ain ond a', rich in larning ond wi' a' the advantages we want, to gainsay what I have said!"

"Nay," said Dr. Esdaile, "'twould be ungallant to observe, that with all her intellectual superiority, woman cannot boast a Shakspeare or a Milton."

"By a mere occident," said Miss Jenny, a little confused. "Shakspeare and Milton were born men; but if we con boast sa mony eminent women, in spite o' the education which mon, governing by brute force, has devised, to make woman either a toy, a doll, or a drudge, what, I ask, might she not ha' achieved, hod her education been ane to enlighten, instead o' to darken her mind—to strengthen, instead o' enfeebling, her body—to fortify, instead o' mollifying, her heart? I suld keep you ower lang, were I to gi'e ye a list o' a' the women, wha, in spite o' an education worse than nane, stand forth pre-eminent in poetry, the *belles-lettres*, in science, and in works o' imagination; but here, amang ye a', fed wi' Euclid fra' boyhood, I proclaim that the first name in science is the name o' a woman—o' Mrs. Somerville—ond thot in a' departments, woman tak's her place beside, if not abune, her tyrant!"

Just as Miss Jenny ceased, the party broke up, and because she had not been answered, she considered her

arguments unanswerable, and proudly reared her head, till she shook her wonted cloud of powder from her *toupe*, and then condescendingly took Doctor Esdaile's arm, like an empress availing herself of the support of some obsequious old lord-in-waiting.

Mrs. Orde, who from incessant sight-seeing, had the sort of nervous head-ache that occupation generally gives, had petitioned for leave to absent herself from the dinner, and lie down, in her room at the hotel, till it was time to take tea and coffee in Gerard's rooms.

Her daughters had left their mother languid and a little weary, but tranquil and happy; they were startled on their return, after an absence of a few hours, to find her flushed, agitated, and her eyes red with weeping. Eagerly they inquired the cause, and sincerely did they share their mother's emotion, when they heard what had so affected her.

"You must know then, my loves," she said, and a sob every now and then interrupted her utterance, "that after you were gone I fell asleep for a few minutes; but was suddenly awaked by the sounds of violent altercation in the adjoining room. It seemed to me like the voice of a woman exculpating herself, deprecating and imploring, and of a man threatening, abusing, and cursing her. One cannot help an involuntary interest in such a conflict, and I sprang from my bed, half-curious and half-terrified, but of course with all my sympathies enlisted on the side of the woman, and every nerve trembling in unison with hers. At length I heard the man's heavy tread across the floor—I felt that he had seized the woman—I heard him cut the air with a whip, and say: 'Now one word—yes or no.' And faintly the woman cried: 'I cannot do it.' Then there was a scuffle, a fall, the slashing sound of a heavy whip, loud curses, and loud threats from the man, and wild shrieks and sobbing promises from the woman. At length there was a pause; the man, in a voice husky with passion, seemed to ask the wretched woman's compliance again; I listened with my soul in my ear, but heard no answer, and, furious at her silence, the villain fell upon her again, and loudly and wildly now the woman shrieked, 'Murder, murder!' and implored

mercy. I called aloud for help—I rang, and believing the wretch was killing her, I tried the door of their room—it was fastened; but as her shrieks faded into groans, and no one came, I drew aside that book-case, unbolted a door, concealed on the other side by a curtain, and stood in the centre of the room. There—oh, dreadful sight—there lay half-dressed, and apparently half-dead too, my poor sister-in-law, your miserable aunt Beauchamp.”

“Oh, mamma,” cried both the girls, bursting into tears.

“Jist wha’ I expected, the puir, the vain auld fule!” said Miss Jenny; but a tear twinkled in her eye too.

“Over her, purple with diabolical rage, and panting from recent exertion, stood that brute, that devil, Crève-cœur, with a large whalebone horse-whip in his hand.”

“And had he, indeed, struck her with it, mamma?”

“I’ll answer for thot: some bruise the speerit, and some bruise the body,” said Miss Jenny, “some wring the heart, and some the neck o’ their victims, but few morried women escape the ain torture or the ither, lassies!—he had beaten her as nane but a brute could beat a hound, niece, eh?”

“Alas! he had indeed, poor, poor creature! Oh, how my heart bled to think, that that was once my only brother’s proud, courted, petted wife!—to think how I have seen him, a brave and noble colonel in the Guards, humour and watch over, and tend that very woman, who now lay like a broken reed under the whip of a brutal foreign adventurer—for *that* he must be—French or English, no gentleman ever married an elderly woman for her money, and then treated her as America treats her slaves, to make her yield him all power, all control over it. I knew him—bloated, horrible monster that he looked—before I knew her: he is twice the size he was—she seems shrunk and wasted almost to a shadow. She had been dressing for dinner when the brute attacked her, requiring, first, all the ready money she had about her (you know she always liked to keep a little *corps de reserve* in her desk and dressing-case, and she fancied he had not discovered it; however, he had watched her too closely for that), and he seems not only to have insisted on her giving him up every farthing, but on her signing

some paper, to empower him to receive all her dividends; and I think, from what I gathered afterwards, to sell out of the funds all that is not settled on her daughters."

"Why, she will be a beggar, mamma."

"Na sic luck," said Miss Jenny; "she'll die broken-hearted, or in Bedlam, before the year's out. But go on, niece."

"Well, as I said, I knew him, and he knew me. 'My poor, poor sister!' I cried, as I rushed to her. He turned sharply round, and there was an evil glare in his eye I did not half like; my woman-wit, however, did not desert me, for I said, 'Sister, the Count de Montfaucon is coming up; rise, dear unhappy sister, and tell me where you are hurt.'

"As I mentioned the name of our dear count, the vile capitaine grew lividly pale; he dropped his horsewhip softly behind him on the rug, tried to force a laugh, and said, half in broken English, half in French,—

"'It is nothing—une petite querelle de ménage. I am one bad boy! one jealous bad boy! and she dress her to please oders, and smile to oders. She forgot poor Adolphe, and then poor Adolphe forgot hisself!'

"Still Barbara spoke not, though I knew she was aware of my presence, for she nervously clutched my hand while tears stole down her cheeks.

"'Come, my own little spousy, montres que tu n'as pas de rancune, lève-toi, ma toute belle; smile on one baddest of jealous boys.'

"And as he spoke he took a large shawl, and carefully wrapped it all round her, but not till I had seen that her wasted neck, shoulders, and, alas! almost skeleton arms, were covered with scarlet wales and bruises, and that her torn white wrapper had two or three stains of blood on it.

"'There, there!' he said, laying her gently on the sofa, and—vile hypocrite—kissing her wan cheek again and again, with playful grimaces; 'there, don't not make no fuss! You shall do the same to one bad boy. Sometimes it is her turn, sometimes mine—look, sister Orde!' said the bold brute, turning up his shirt sleeves, and showing several frightful bruises on his brawny arms; she have had her day—she can beat her bad boy!'

"I looked in amazement and inquiry at poor Barbara, but she took no notice of the assertion, in fact her eyes were closed and she seemed still insensible; but I know she heard it, for she told me afterwards that she had no more to do with those bruises than I had, but that he had received them in a drunken row, having insulted in the street some woman whose husband turned out to be too much for the inebriated captain. However, her silence seeming to confirm the wretch's statement, he rubbed his hands, and said,—

"Come, sister Orde, I tink I have had de worst of it, but I forgive in one little minute. Je n'ai pas de rancune; Adolphe est vif, emporté, jaloux, mais il a un bon cœur; n'est-ce pas, ma mie, mon chou, ma petite Barbare? And how is all the dear peoples—how is my pretty nieces, Rosalie and Jeannetta?"

"The wretch! the impertinent horror!" cried the girls in one breath.

"How is my dear great auntie?"

"The scoondrel! the jockanapes!" screamed Miss Jenny; "he'd better na claim me as his aunt, the brute—but go on."

"He then led the conversation to our dear Gonzalve, and expressed a great wish to see him. I told him where to find him, hoping he would go out in search of him at once, and leave me to ascertain the real state of mind and body of my poor sister-in-law; but he stipulated that she should lie down, and that I should leave her to compose herself. He carefully locked and bolted our door of communication; and as I heard him lock her in, before he went down-stairs, I scarcely hoped to see her; judge of my surprise when she appeared at that window, which, it seems, is connected by a balcony with her own. She came in, and told me a sad tale of Crève-cœur's ill-usage, but, with her wonted vanity and fatal love of misrepresentation, she tried to make me believe that jealousy was at the bottom of it. Still she let out that he is the most grasping, cruel, and brutal of men, in fact, she contradicted herself so often, and seemed so bewildered, that I fear her poor head is not quite right!"

"It was na' ower right, when she mad siccan a' fule o' hersel' as to morry the coof."

"She seemed terrified to death at the thought of his finding out that she had seen me—and yet narrowly escaped his doing so; indeed had not I watched him coming from the confectioner's opposite (where, as I sat at the window, I had seen him devour a whole tin of patties and tarts, and swallow a dozen glasses of jelly and of ice)—had I not, I say, seen him leave the shop and enter this hotel, he would have caught her after all."

"She ran away like a frightened hare, poor wretch! when I told her 'the hound was in view.' And we must consult with our dear Montfaucon, who knows Captain Crèveœur so well, what can be done to better your poor aunt's situation."

"Oh, whatever is noble, and wise, and good, Gonzalve will not only suggest but enforce!" said Jeannetta, as she left the room.

"Mamma," said Rosalie, after she was gone, "I do not half like the fact, that the count's intimate friend is so vile, so bad a man."

"That we may be kenned by our associates is a truth become proverbial," said Miss Jenny. "I canna but feel some misgivings mysel'."

"You wrong our noble Gonzalve," said Mrs. Orde. "He is in every respect the very antipodes of the captain, and has been as much taken in by his apparent *bonhomie* and frankness as we have."

"God grant it may be so!" said Rosalie.

"A's weel that ends weel," suggested Miss Jenny.

"Amen," said Mrs. Orde. And when alone she thought over those words, and poured out her thanks to a merciful Providence, which had spared her the fulfilment of her own vain, short-sighted desire, and supplying the captain, alas! with another victim, left her free and happy to keep the even tenour of her way.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE PRIZE POEM.

WHAT a pity it is, that our reflections on the past so seldom really influence our conduct in the future! How much misery might we escape, if we suffered experience

to rouse us to action rather than to sink us into regretful reverie.

Mrs. Orde blushed over her own weakness, folly, and vanity in having ever dreamt of putting herself in the power of a man whom she did not know to be a good, a Christian character ; and Jeannetta stood on the self-same precipice, and though it was yet time, her mother, blinded by ambition, pride, and woman's love of what seems beautiful and great, did not even attempt to save her.

It never occurred to her, that the case was a similar one in many respects. She only saw the *outward* contrast presented by the count and the captain—she did not remember that both, while professing to be members of the Roman Catholic Church, ridiculed her superstitions, her trickery, cupidity, and presumption—laughed at her miracles, and scoffed at her relics ; and that, because they had been required to believe too much, they had ended by believing nothing.

Yet both professed a universal tolerance—a general charity, and declared that had they not been born Catholics they would gladly have become Protestants ; and Jeannetta, making the most (as a loving woman always does) of every little gleam of hope, and promise of goodness, persuaded herself that if as a *lover* the count tolerated her faith, as a *husband* she should be able to persuade him to adopt it,—if *now* he went to church once to please her, *then* he would be glad to go twice,—if now he listened so amiably, while she read to him extracts from good and pious writers, then he would consent to hear their whole works, or perhaps peruse them himself. Alas ! alas !—but we anticipate !

The day of Gerard's triumph came on. The theatre was full to an overflow. The great, the learned, and the fair thronged to hear the young poet, the scholar (by the consent of all the first men of his year), recite the English prize poem ; which though not (among classics) the greatest honour he had achieved, was the only one of the merits of which the company in general could judge.

It was a beautiful, a classic, and a graceful composition ; and when Gerard Esdaile, pale with emotion and

with the touching timidity of genius and youth, appeared in the rostrum, the interest he excited was so deep, that the silence and stillness of death prevailed.

As he spoke, at first with trembling voice, and with a heart the quick throbs of which made his white hands quiver, a feeling of anxious sympathy prevailed; but when, rising with his subject, he forgot his audience in the inspiration of his muse, and every line conveyed some new and striking truth, or delicate and lovely image, in exquisite language, the cheeks of his hearers glowed in unison with his own, and at the first break, shouts of applause, long, loud, and heartfelt, filled the vaulted building.

All this time, our party had of course felt *most* keenly and deeply, what all present had felt so much; even Jeannetta, though her lover was by her side, could not watch the struggle and the triumph of her early playmate—her boy-lover, and her still devoted friend—without a pale cheek, and an emotion which the count marked with a jealous though well-concealed anger. Old Dr. Esdaile sat by his especial favourite, Rosalie, whose usually roseate complexion was perfectly white, and whose eyes were full of tears. Old Dr. Esdaile, too, pale in spite of the rubicund tint natural to his jolly face, held Rosalie's hand with a nervous clutch, the tightness of which both were too engrossed to heed.

"Poor boy! poor boy!" muttered the father when his son began. "He'll never get through it. Yes, he will—he will—bravo! my brave boy! bravo! pride of his old father's heart! Good son! good son! Oh, that his dead mother could see this day!"

And when the shouts of applause rent the air, the poor old doctor bowed his silver head upon his knees, buried his face in both his hands, and wept like a child. Nor wept alone—for slowly and silently over Rosalie's pale cheeks the large drops fell like rain!

Miss Jenny, who was herself a votary of the muse, and who, in Gerard's early boyhood, had cultivated his taste for poetry, and taught him to recite many quaint old productions of her own youth, looked upon his success as a triumph of her own. Proudly she tossed her powdered head aloft at every bright idea, beating the measure the while with her fan.

"It's weel enough, weel enough," she whispered to Mrs. Orde; "but it would ha' been a warld better, hod he submeeted it to me, wha first taught him the rules o' varseefecation. Still it's na' that bod, for the present day;—but it's to woman he owes it a', even to mysel'; and what poet does not owe to womankind, in some shape or ither, ony success in the devine art o' poetry?"

Miss Jenny's applause, however, was much more enthusiastic and unconditional when, availing himself of an opportunity naturally presented by the subject, Gerard Esdaile paid an eloquent, a touching, nay, an inspiring tribute to the moral and intellectual excellence of woman.

He had enlisted on his side all the youthful members of his audience by a brief but glowing picture of woman's beauty and woman's love; and as there was perhaps scarcely one young student present in the secret Eden of whose bosom some hidden *Ida* was not enshrined, all only awaited, with breathless enthusiasm, the winding up of the passage to pour forth their hoarded rapture and their deep delight. This passage, decidedly the gem of the poem, closed the recitation, and so tumultuous was the applause it created, that it was some time before anything like tranquillity was restored, and before Miss Jenny, wiping a tear from her usually cold, proud eye, said to Dr. Esdaile, shaking hands with him warmly:—

"Noo, doctor, I con congratulate you on your son. It's sa mooch the foshion o' those degenerate days to underrate woman's intellect, and woman's moral excellences, thot I feel prood o' my quondam pupil when I hear him do some puir justice to the last and best o' God's warks; and when a whole univarsity rises, as ain mon, and rings wi' applause o' sic' sentiments, I foresee the abolition o' mental slavery ond moral degradation for womankind; ond I expect (tho' Jenny Macpherson may na' live to see it) thot woman will, ere lang, take her proper ond her destined place in the social scale."

Old Dr. Esdaile was too happy to disagree, and so, for once, Miss Jenny had it all her own way.

After they left the theatre, Mrs. Orde hastened to call on Lady Beauchamp Crèveœur,—as her sister-in-law,

transferring her title to her present name, called herself on a card which Mrs. Orde found on her table. Her heart was full of misgivings when, in return to her anxious inquiries, she heard that the stout, foreign officer and the invalid lady had left the hotel the evening before. All she could learn from the count was, that in reply to his questions on the subject, Captain Crèveœur had declared that his lady led him a miserable life, that she was always abusing him, and frequently struck him; that she tried to appropriate, and to lock up, all the money of both parties; that her jealousy, though quite groundless, knew no bounds; and that, at the slightest provocation, and often without any at all, she would throw at her husband's head anything she happened to have in her hand, thereby more than once endangering his life; that he had tried forbearance, persuasion, coaxing, absence, indifference, contempt; and had found, at last, that nothing but gentle though resolute chastisement was of the least avail.

The count expressed the greatest disapprobation, and even abhorrence, of the system the captain had adopted; he added:—

"I always found Crèveœur the best-tempered creature in the world, and thought him a thoroughly good-hearted man; what can have wrought such a change in him, I cannot conceive. Is your sister-in-law an amiable woman?"

"Oh, no!" said Jeannetta, anxious to find some excuse for Crèveœur, because he was the count's friend; "if any woman's temper could make a man forget what he owes to his wife's dignity and his own, it would be poor aunt Beauchamp's."

"I doot she's met wi' mair than her motch even in temper," groaned Miss Jenny.

"I think," said Rosalie, "it is our duty, and yours too, count, to protect her from such a brute, and to promote a separation."

"If such were the count's duty, Rosalie," said Jeannetta, proudly, "he would not have required to be reminded of it!"

"Alas! alas!" said kind-hearted, but rather feeble-minded and temporizing Mrs. Orde, "what can we do?"

She is his wife, and no good ever comes of interfering between man and wife."

"Why," said Rosalie, "judicious interference might often prevent a wretched woman's murder. What say you, count?"

"Interference between man and wife! I should like to see that man who should dare to interfere, by word, or look, or sentence, between me—" His excited voice, flashing eye, and white lip startled even Jeannetta, and Rosalie uttered a cry of surprise. It seemed to recall him to himself; for he said, releasing a chair he had tightly clutched, and changing his look and tone: "Between me and that angel of life whom I am to cherish and protect, and who is to lead me from an Eden on earth to one in heaven!"

As he spoke he drew Jeannetta towards him, and with one arm round her waist he led her to the window seat. And though Rosalie and Miss Jenny persisted that something *should* be done to save the wretched victim, Lady Crèveœur, from the dreadful fate her treachery, vanity, and cupidity had entailed on her, nothing was decided upon at the time. But Miss Jenny resolved to write to the Society for the Protection of Women, and Rosalie determined on consulting Dr. Esdaile and Gerard, as to how her unhappy aunt could be released from so brutal a tyrant, and so vile a bondage.

CHAPTER LXIV.

JEANNETTA'S WEDDING.

THE day so ardently desired came at last—Jeannetta's wedding was celebrated in London. She would have preferred her dear, old country home, her ancestral hall—beautiful Fairfield! She would have preferred being made a wife in that dear old church in which she had been made a Christian, and where from infancy to womanhood she had been wont to offer up her prayers and learn to live—to die! But the necessity of celebrating the marriage in a

Roman Catholic chapel as well as in a Protestant church compelled Jeannetta to consent to a London wedding—much to Mrs. Orde's annoyance, the count wished it to be almost a private one. She had hoped to have seen the street filled with coroneted carriages, and to have done the honours to several of the ambassadors; but the count inveighed so warmly against what he called the indelicacy of making the sacred festival of the honest affections a glittering show for the vulgar, and Jeannetta saw so completely with his eyes, and judged with his judgment, that Mrs. Orde was obliged to forego all her triumphs, and relinquish all her vanities. She was a little consoled, however, by his saying:—

“When we return from the wedding tour, dearest mamma-elect, and when the bride's timid blush is exchanged for the wife's tranquil bloom, and this nervous excitement of mine for the calm of assured happiness, then you shall show us to all your friends; and the more splendidly you frame and set off the picture of wedding happiness, the more proud and pleased shall I be.”

With this Mrs. Orde was obliged to content herself; and the party consisted of Dr. Esdaile, who, though implored to do so, refused to tie the knot that was to bind Jeannetta to one an alien to her faith—of Gerard—of poor Violet, who had arrived at Mrs. Orde's, but, as they were starting for Oxford, who had awaited their return at their earnest entreaty, and who now, at the generous and noble-minded request of Jeannetta, joined Rosalie in officiating as bridesmaid. The Baron and Baronne de Saint Felix were present, and Mrs. Orde's niece, the Countess of Tunbridge, just arrived from Paris, and escorted, not, as all expected, by the old earl, but by his nephew, her quondam admirer, Captain Trevanion.

The bride was as solicitous about her appearance, and as exquisitely attired, as if, instead of this small family party, her nuptials had been graced by all the *élite* of the nobility.

Her costly veil could not conceal her happy blushes and her happier tears, and the beautiful bouquet of orange flowers, made of orient pearls, with topaz centres and emerald leaves (a perfect triumph of taste and splendour), quivered with every throb of her enraptured bosom, and

seemed to borrow some of its sparkling refulgence from the loyal and happy heart beneath.

The count was deadly pale and considerably agitated. He had received letters by that morning's post, as he told Jeannetta and her mother, announcing very painful intelligence, and which might compel him to take a much longer journey, and be absent a more considerable time than Jeannetta and himself had planned; but what most mortified and distressed Mrs. Orde was a request, nay, almost a command, backed by Jeannetta, that the marriage should not appear in the papers.

He hinted that an uncle, from whom he had immense expectations, and who evidently wished him to marry his adopted niece, was dangerously ill, and that, perhaps, the knowledge that his nephew had put it quite out of his power to comply with his wishes might induce him to leave everything to his niece, and cut his nephew, the Count de Montfaucon, entirely out of the rich inheritance.

Mrs. Orde shed many a bitter tear over the sacrifice of the splendid paragraph she had got ready for insertion in all the papers. The nuptials from which she had expected so much triumph and *éclat* had brought her, as yet, nothing but disappointment and mortification; even the great and guilty object, which had induced her in the first instance to welcome a foreign alliance, namely, the triumphing over poor Lady Beauchamp, had lost its zest since she had seen that once insolent, provoking, and contemptuous rival shrunk into a consumptive wreck, and the half crazed victim of a foreign brute.

On this long-anticipated wedding-day, a drizzling rain fell incessantly: Rosalie was deeply depressed, for she had great misgivings about her sister's fate. Miss Jenny, who always looked upon a wedding as the funeral of a woman's happiness and freedom, and who was not gifted with "tact," was full of evil forebodings. Gerard was sad because Rosalie wept so bitterly. Dr. Esdaile could not smile while a Roman Catholic, who was not even sincere in the faith he professed, and did not even pretend to be so, carried away, among the wolves of France, one of the most beloved lambs of his fold—one over whose early training he had so exulted, and about whom he now felt

as we should feel if we saw a dear one embark in a crazy vessel with an incompetent pilot, and saw storms lowering in the distance, and knew that rocks threatened and quicksands abounded.

The little Baron de Saint Felix seemed to have lost much of his sparkling vivacity, his self-possession, and his French *suffisance*. By this time he had discovered that he had been completely outwitted in his matrimonial speculation. The sum of ready money which, in true French style, he had produced, and half of which he had borrowed of Crèveœur to make a show, he had been compelled to settle on his bride, Miss Mostyn, in return for, not as he expected, a handsome portion, paid down on the marriage, but for her father's bond for a splendid allowance. Of this allowance one quarter was paid in advance, but there had been a great break-up of the Mostyn family. Immediately after the wedding, the bride's parents went abroad, and the baron was left with a bond for a thousand a-year secured on West India property which once brought in its annual six thousand, but which at the time of the marriage, as the bride and her parents well knew, would never produce the unlucky baron an income of five pounds sterling.

With regard to the sum he had settled on his Juliana, in case of her dying before him without issue, it was to return to him; but she was a very strong and healthy young woman, with those guarantees of long life (according to Napoleon)—a good digestion and a hard heart—resolute, energetic, sarcastic, a great vixen when it suited her to be so, selfish in carrying out her own plans and wishes, always the first to attack the baron rather than to defend herself—a great walker, rider, dancer, and eater, and feeling, and not caring much if she betrayed, a great contempt for the somewhat effeminate fair little coxcomb above whom she towered by the head.

The assumption of superiority in her secured from the Baron de Saint Felix, as it does from all inferior natures, a great outward show of deference; and by contriving to look and speak like an empress, she made her little husband treat her as one.

Flirt as he was, and as he had so decidedly and constantly been from his boyhood, he did not dare, in the

presence of his baronne, to launch one *caillade* at—or breathe one sigh, or to produce one tear, for any other beauty present. Not that Juliana, Baronne de Saint Felix, condescended to be jealous of him; but she was intensely so of her own dignity, and did not choose to be, for one moment, in the position of a wife whose husband neglected her charms to pay any tribute to those of another woman. On her own side, she scrupled not to coquette with any one who pleased her very peculiar taste; but as she seldom met with any man at all to her fancy, she had escaped the character of a flirt.

To any one who watched this pair closely, it was clear that, though the baronne's insolent and imperious manner awed the little baron, and though he watched the flash of her black eagle eye, the toss of her haughty head, the sneer of her aquiline nose, her handsome but amiable mouth, and the gestures of her long, white hand—in short, though he feared her—yet a deep, a settled, and malignant hatred for her filled his narrow heart. This hatred loomed every now and then from the watchful eye, once so full of merry light, and might be traced in the sudden pallor of his cheek, the silent grinding of his teeth, and the clenching of his little fist. Oh, wretched, wretched union of two deceivers! Both bent solely on gain—both duped—both snared; a wife whose deepest feeling is contempt—a husband who has already learnt to hate!

From the painful contemplation of this miserable match of interest and ambition (both defeated), Mrs. Orde mournfully turned to watch the young Countess of Tunbridge. Already, dissipation, domestic discomfort, and all the fretful cares and sorrows of a marriage without affection—but with a distaste which had become disgust—had sharpened into unfeminine prominence the fine features, once so lovely in their first girlish roundness; already, dark and hollow circles were traced round the eyes; already, a sodden and a sallow complexion was established in the place of the crystal transparency of yore, and the glaring, artificial rose supplied the once virgin bloom; the manner, too, once arch, *naïve*, and winning, was restless, insolent, pettish, and coaxing by turns; a bad habit, borrowed from the least admirable of

our fashionables—a habit of quizzing promiscuously everybody and everything—was indulged in to excess, and carried on with Captain Trevanion, the only person the young countess seemed to deem worthy of her notice. Captain Trevanion was a handsome, fashionable, scornful, and very satirical dragoon officer, half a dandy, half a sporting man, but of a conceit and presumption quite unequalled. He at once took the fancy of la Baronne de Saint Felix, and amused himself alternately by sily and haughtily flirting with the baronne, ogling Rosalie and Violet, and charming the countess by ridiculing them all.

The incessant rain making it impossible after the *déjeuner*, and after the bride's departure, for the company to go anywhere in search of amusement, all sought their respective homes till the hour fixed for the dinner-party; and, when left alone, poor Mrs. Orde, recalling, in her wretched sister-in-law, in the Baronne de Saint Felix, and in rumours of the domestic misery of the Marchese di Castelnovo, the danger of foreign alliances, and in the young Countess of Tunbridge the result of a *mariage de convenances*, trembled and wept as she thought of her darling Jeannetta.

Poor and disappointed mother! Is this thy anticipated day of triumph and rejoicing? There is something painfully like a funeral in every marriage; but in this, the house deserted, the guests all gone, and nothing but regret and misgivings left, the resemblance was striking indeed.

The only gleam of joy that brightened the dark prospect in Mrs. Orde's mind, was the hope that Rosalie would form that union she had once so dreaded and despised; that she, to her present notions, loveliest and most loveable of her daughters would make a match in which interest, vanity, and ambition had no share; that rational and mutual affection should form the basis of that marriage; and that she should feel that security which no woman can feel who does not marry a true Christian, one of whose faith, creed, and principles she can feel certain.

Mrs. Orde became as feverishly anxious now to see her daughter Rosalie affianced to Gerard Esdaile as she had been to unite her to some magnate of the land.

"What good," she murmured, "does it do a mother to have her daughter removed by marriage to some sphere where she can hardly ever hope to meet her? Jeannetta, by this splendid match, is, I fear, as completely lost to me as my nieces were to their wretched mother; but if Rosalie marries Gerard—the dear old Rectory so close to the Hall!—the dear boy loving me as a mother!—I shall realize what so many find so fallacious a promise: I shall not lose a daughter, but gain a son!"

As she spoke, Rosalie glided in to comfort and to cheer, having dried her own tears and sought strength and solace where alone it is to be found! Rosalie came to remind her mother that Jeannetta had married the object of her passionate love; that it had always struck them all how vivid a contrast the count presented to the baron and the captain; and that if he was not, in point of faith, all she could wish, that Jeannetta was strong in her own belief, and resolute in practical piety, and that the Book of Truth itself avers that the unbelieving husband shall be sanctified by the believing wife.

Having poured oil and balm into the wounds of her mother's heart, Rosalie caused a bright fire to be lighted in her room, and made her some cheering tea. She threw a warm cloak over, and watched her till she fell asleep. She then dressed herself with exquisite taste and elegant simplicity for the dinner-party; and Dr. Esdaile having betaken himself to the British Museum—and the cold rain still pouring incessantly—Rosalie, though it was summer, had fires lighted; and, though they had not dined, delighted poor Gerard by having her tea-table brought to the fire for him.

And there they sat, incipient lovers! who had not yet vulgarized their delicious emotions by one word of love! Poor Gerard! all the anguish that for months Jeannetta's coldness had cost him is forgotten by Rosalie's side—every bitter tear of first love disappointed—and when is it not disappointed?—is dried up and forgotten in the sunshine of Rosalie's smile. Oh, what a happy *tête-à-tête* was that! That day to them is the brightest of their young existence; they spoke not much, but their silence was—how eloquent!—They marked not the flight of time, nor noticed that the day faded, and that it was

the warm glow of the fire-light that they looked into each other's eyes; and Gerard had stolen Rosalie's hand, and was about to tell her—what she knew so well already,—when a rustling of silks was heard, and Miss Jenny, in full dress, her powdered *toupe* crowned with diamonds, wearing a necklace, ear-rings, and solitaire to match, her well-preserved white satin *sacque* and quilted petticoat of rose brocade, her widest hoop and highest heels, came in, armed with her best fan and diamond snuff-box, to await the arrival of the company.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE WEDDING DINNER.

THE dinner was a long, formal, and heavy affair,—except to Rosalie and Gerard, who contrived to sit together in spite of all the little baron's spiteful manœuvres and Captain Trevanion's bold military tactics.

Poor Violet having retired to her room with a severe headache, pretty Rosalie was the only object of any real interest to him—of his once beautiful, but fast-fading, exacting, and jealous aunt-in-law he was growing very tired. The Baronne de Saint Felix was the sort of woman he detested, and he only encouraged her glances because it was habitual with him to flirt with any married woman who was neither old nor ugly.

But pretty Rosalie, from whom he could not succeed in obtaining a look or a smile, became, partly perhaps for that very reason, an object of lively and intense interest, and he delighted to torture the jealous heart of her cousin, the young Countess of Tunbridge, with the warmest eulogies of one whom he had already discovered she both envied and hated.

Nothing could be more dull and commonplace than this wedding party, except to Rosalie and Gerard, who were in Elysium, because they were together—to Captain Trevanion, because it was new to him to meet any woman whose notice he had to court and to win, and he was amused by the novelty; and to the young countess, and

the baronne—the one writhing under the painful and rousing sense of the approaching desertion of him to whom she had sacrificed so much, and the other feeling, for the first time in her life, something of the exciting witchery of a real interest in another!

Poor Mrs. Orde tried to rally and to do the honours with her wonted lively and endearing cordiality; but she only succeeded in driving back her tears, and in showing due attention to her guests.

She so sadly missed the newly-married pair. For months the count had taken the bottom of her table, and she had been wont to see her stately Jeannetta at his side in all the beauty and happiness of love. The count had ever been so devoted, so delicately devoted a lover, and his attentions had not been selfishly and exclusively paid to her he adored, but, for her sake, were lavished on all dear to her!

Poor Mrs. Orde! Some silent tears dropped on the bridal *bouquet* he had presented her with, as she thought it was perhaps the last he might ever give her—he who had daily delighted to give her a nosegay of her favourite flowers! All foreigner as he was, and apparently of a grave, exalted, and pre-occupied character, it had ever been his wont to bring to the family of his beloved every little novelty that could delight the peculiar tastes of each: new books and new songs to Rosalie; every ingenious little foreign novelty in fancy works to Mrs. Orde; and every striking tribute to woman's excellence, in every shape, to Miss Jenny.

Then, having no son of her own, it was so delightful to Mrs. Orde to have so noble, so efficient, so liberal a cavalier to escort her in public! and her mother-heart so triumphed in the touching, delicate, and devoted homage he so unvaryingly paid to Jeannetta. Her "beauty" did not seem to "grow familiar to the lover," at least not that familiarity which breeds contempt; whatever brilliant or noble belles were present, he seemed to have no eyes but for her. If he could not dance with her, he did not dance at all, but hovered near her, holding her fan, her scarf, her bouquet. He never relaxed in any of the little attentions which woman values more from an accepted than a probationary lover, and more from a husband than either.

He was always more than punctual, and though often evidently anxious, dejected, and thoughtful, he always accounted for these moods by the long delay of their nuptials, and never suffered a tinge of moroseness or of sullenness to vulgarize his despondency.

No wonder the mother loved, with all a mother's pride, the daughter's lover—the stately, proud, and even haughty aristocrat, who became so gentle, fond, and tenderly provident in his intercourse with the mother of his affianced—who was almost as careful of her shawl and boa as of his Jeannetta's—almost as watchful over her health, safety, and comfort; who feared a draught for her more than she did for herself, and who had often carried her in his powerful and noble arms, to save her a muddy crossing or a brooklet in a country walk.

True, Gerard Esdaile, if he proposed to Rosalie, might in some degree supply the place of Gonzalve De Montfaucon; but Gerard was so matter-of-fact; he had nothing in him of *l'homme aux petits soins*; he never thought about flowers, nor *bonbons*, nor new novels, nor new music; was much more disposed to laugh at, than to encourage Miss Jenny's monomania; never gave a thought to shawls, boas, draughts, muddy crossings, or gutters; had no *talents de société*; was seldom early at a *rendez-vous*; and had been late, when engaged by a favourite classic, or embarked in an argument; and more than once, having taken up "Punch," "Vanity Fair," or "Dombey and Son," had forgotten, not only Mrs. Orde and Miss Jenny, but Rosalie herself; and sat laughing to himself and quite engrossed, to the annoyance of Mrs. Orde, the towering indignation and contempt of Miss Jenny, and the amusement of Rosalie, who did not wish her lover to be a courtier or a slave, and thought that a man might make a very good husband, even if, as a lover, he was not always *aux petits soins*, and could forget her shawl, her mother's boa, and Miss Jenny's importance while reading a masterpiece of humour or of pathos.

The dinner-party dragged heavily on; one handsome course succeeded another; and at last the orthodox time had elapsed, and the ladies adjourned.

The gentlemen, who found Mrs. Orde's wines first-rate—her wines were always chosen for her by Dr. Esdaile,

a first-rate *connoisseur*—were so long before they appeared in the drawing-room that Miss Jenny had retired in highly-offended maiden dignity, after having vented her wrath in a sweeping condemnation of the whole sex, married and single.

The once radiant, once joyous and hopeful Louisa, Countess of Tunbridge, was watching every opening of the drawing-room door and every step on the stairs, as a woman who still loves, and has sacrificed conscience to passion, watches for the arrival of him who has changed her from his tyrant to his slave, and is becoming—oh! maddening retribution that waits on lawless love—wearied of the very slave he has made. Trembling, pallid even through her rouge, watchful, with white lips apart, her wasted bosom beating wildly beneath her bridal pearls; her thin hands clasped convulsively; tears in her eyes, and despair, or that faint, sickening hope which is worse than despair, in her wretched heart, the young countess sat in a chair near the door, answering at random, with an absent stare and sickly, artificial smile, any remark she could not pretend not to hear; now trying to nerve her heart and cheer her spirit by going over to herself every tender speech Captain Trevanion had ever made her, every proof of admiration and of love he had ever given her, and then—ingenious self-tormentor, as a loving woman always is—maddening herself with every gradual indication of estrangement and of indifference, till it required all her womanly pride and power of concealment to prevent her yielding to the hysterical sobs that almost choked her, and shrieking aloud in her well-merited anguish.

And Rosalie, in all the freshness of her innocent and happy beauty, quite unsuspecting of evil in her cousin, and equally so of her frantic jealousy towards herself, drew near the young countess, laid her little plump white hand with its taper fingers on the arm, wasted almost to the bone, of the wretched Louisa, and kindly asked her if she was not well; but at her velvet touch and enchanting smile, so full of the innocence the countess had lost, the happiness she had sold, and the beauty she so envied, she shrunk from Rosalie with so maniac a violence, looked into her clear eyes with so wolfish a

malice, and shudderingly turned away with so marked a dislike that Rosalie drew back—a frightful suspicion that Louisa, Countess of Tunbridge, was not in her right mind flashing across her brain for the first time. However, in a few moments the countess turned to her with a smile, took both her hands, shook them vehemently, and said that when Rosalie spoke to her, she was suffering from a severe twinge of *tic-douleureux* which sometimes attacked her.

Having satisfied herself that the pain was gone, Rosalie left her cousin, and, at the entreaty of several of the ladies, opening the piano, sang:—

“HE IS GONE—HE IS COME!

“Wild o’er her pale cheek wanders her dark hair!
 ‘Neath her long lashes the big tears have met,
 Fled from that face is the spirit that sparkled there,
 Now like a pale rose with evening dews wet.
 Loose and neglected her robe floats around her,
 Mute is her voice and her harp’s thrilling tone,
 Sorrow, ah! say with what spell hast thou bound her?
 Lady, what means all this?—Oh, he is gone!

“See, she comes forth like the sun in the morning!
 Joy on her lip and delight in her eye,
 Gems and fresh flowers her beauty adorning,
 And if she sighs—it is pleasure’s deep sigh.
 Hark! a wild welcome bursts from her silver voice,
 But when she tells of her late cruel fears,
 Joy has no accents for those who in truth rejoice,
 And the devoted one bursts into tears.
 Perfumes of Araby round her are breathing,
 Deck’d is her form in the wealth of the loom,
 Pearls from the ocean her tresses are wreathing,
 Lady, what means all this?—Oh, he is come!”

Rosalie had a very clear, sweet voice; it had been judiciously cultivated, and she sang with touching pathos. The picture of loneliness and self-abandonment of the first stanza touched to the quick the young countess’s heart; the hope and the spirit Rosalie infused into the reunion for a moment shed a lustre over the gloom of her spirit; and when pressed to sing in her turn, she took up a guitar that lay beside her, and began, in a voice whose hollow and mournful sounds startled those accustomed to the brilliant triumphant notes of the celebrated songstress, Louisa Beauchamp:—

"Weep not for me, though the hopes that I cherish'd
Have vanished like snow-flakes that melt in the sea,
And the flowers that grew by life's wayside have perish'd,
My dark day is closing—then weep not for me!

"Weep not for me, for too fondly I loved him,
Nor deemed that the creature I worshipp'd could be
The idol of clay sad experience has proved him,
I loved him too blindly—then weep not for me!

"Oh, when in the bosom of earth they have laid me,
Some gentle regret in his heart there may be,
He may seek the dark cypress and yew tree that shade me,
And own that I loved him—then weep not for me!"

The young countess had scarcely ended the last melancholy prophecy of her heart when steps were heard on the stairs, the door was thrown open, she half rose from her seat, convinced that *he* was come at last!—and though "at last" to her heart, yet first among the revellers—and afraid lest he should miss her, seated as she was almost behind the door, and accost Rosalie—when she suddenly grew deadly pale and sank back in her chair, for the butler announced—"The Earl of Tunbridge."

More purple, more bald, more toothless, and far more corpulent than when *she wooed him, for he had never wooed her*, did the old earl appear as he staggered into the drawing-room; and it became evident to all the shrinking and terrified ladies in general, and to his unhappy wife in particular, that he was at once *elevated* and *degraded*. Because he was fat, rubicund, hospitable, a *bon vivant*, and fond of a joke, the Earl of Tunbridge had the character of a good-natured man; but if wine is the key of the heart, when his was opened that opinion was changed—for "in his cups" he was very quarrelsome, sarcastic, insolent, and even abusive; prone at such times to jealousy, and very vindictive against his wife and any one whom he suspected her of liking.

He made a series of half-tipsy bows to the ladies, and said to Mrs. Orde:—

"I couldn't do myself the honour of dining with you, my dear aunt-in-law!—For I'd pledged myself a month ago to a white-bait dinner at Greenwich with Forbes, and—and, let me see, where was I?—Oh, they swore I

couldn't do it—I betted them six dozen of Lafitte I'd be here to-night—and here I am!”

“And I am truly happy to see you, my lord!”

“Well, that's more than my lady there seems to be. I say, old aunty, my old girl!” and his lordship forgot his own and Mrs. Orde's dignity so far as to stagger up to her and give her a poke in the ribs, accompanied by a wink, “I say COURTSHIP and WEDLOCK are two things, you know, aunty, old girl! *She* did all the courting—then it was all smiles and bows, and curtsies, and ‘My dear lord!’ and I was ‘such a love,’ and ‘such a beauty!’

‘Such a beauty I did grow, did grow, did grow,’”

he sang in a husky, shaking voice as he turned to a side-table on which some refreshments stood, and poured out and drank a tumbler of sherry.

His wretched young countess seeing this, and not knowing what might come next, drew near the piano, where the haughty baronne was sitting, prepared to play a show-off piece, and tried to ensconce herself behind the instrument; but the earl saw her, and a vindictive glare shot across his maudlin eye, as he reeled up to the instrument, and very nearly upset the baronne and her music-stool.

“I beg—your pardon—Miss—Miss Mostyn—the—”

“*La Baronne de Saint Felix!* my lord,” said the lady haughtily, drawing herself up.

“Ha! ha! ha! What does *la baronne* mean, I wonder? If you're a baroness, say so—there's no such thing—in England as a *baronne*—except a baron of beef—and a good thing too! Why, you've a pair of fine black eyes though, my girl, baronne or beggar—eh?” And he pinched her cheek, and chucked her under the chin, as it was his wont to do a pretty *soubrette*, or chamber-maid; and with just such a spirit as he often encountered in such objects of his attentions, the vixen, Juliana Mostyn, forgetting the impassability and *hauteur* of the Baronne de Saint Felix, hit the old earl a box on the ears, so powerfully applied, with an arm and hand that might have been a house-maid's (except for its whiteness and its gems), that he spun round, staggered, and lay prostrate on the rug.

Mrs. Orde, much ashamed both of the earl's inebriety and the baronne's vulgar revenge, hastened to raise him, which was not done without much difficulty, as he was very heavy and very giddy, and seemed quite satisfied to sit on the rug, winking and blinking, laughing till the tears ran down his purple cheeks, and shouting out choruses of drinking songs.

As the countess shudderingly and naturally turned away her head from this hideous picture of age, bloated, inebriated, and robbed of all that makes age dignified and lovely, and felt in her own seared and wretched heart that she was sunk even below a wretch like that, a bitter sense of retributive justice for her perjury at the altar filled her heart; and any one who could have read the dreadful secrets of that heart, the heart of a bride under twenty, would have owned, that the history of that young countess formed a more bitter and more startling warning against a loveless union of age and youth, a profane marriage of interest and ambition, than any homily on the subject the most eloquent of preachers could produce.

At length the old earl was on his legs again, and the ladies shrunk away and huddled together, and he followed them with a sort of reeling dancing step—contrasting their avoidance now with their eager pursuit of him when he was a bachelor, and winding up with scraps of comic songs.

The countess, who was dreadfully afraid, seeing the state the earl was in, of some disgraceful scene between him and the nephew he so much hated, was as anxious to go at once as she had been to see Captain Trevanion.

But, with the dogged obstinacy of inebriety, he determined to stay; and he had just caught hold of the haughty baronne and the frightened Rosalie, to make them dance a jig with him, when the gentlemen, who had delayed long under the old-fashioned and hospitable auspices of Dr. Esdaile, joined the ladies.

They all came up laughing, chatting, and certainly a little excited, except Captain Trevanion, who was a sort of man on whom no quantity of wine had any visible effect. Seeing his uncle clutching the baronne with one hand and Rosalie with the other, he cried,—

"No, no, uncle—fair play, if you please! You mustn't engross all the beauty in the room!"

And then, without looking to see what lady it was sat near the piano, he said,—

"Come, as it's a family party, let's have a waltz. 'The Pestal,' if you please." And he tried to make Rosalie take a few turns; and just as they drew close to the countess he said to Rosalie,—

"Do waltz with me, there's a kind, lovely soul. Think how I've been bored all day—but a *tour de valse* with you would more than atone! You won't! Cruel! Play a waltz, will you, if you please?"

Poor young countess! As she overheard all this, tears of jealous anguish filled her eyes, and the blood forsook her lips and cheeks. As Rosalie had forcibly withdrawn her waist from Captain Trevanion's grasp, he stood alone; and knew not it was the once-adored Louisa at his side, till he heard a low voice, half broken by sobs, exclaim—

"Do not parade your admiration for her and your scorn of me, oh, Walter! unless you would see me die at your feet."

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Louisa!" whispered the heartless idol. "I hate tears, and I loathe all jealousy and ill temper; but above all things I abominate a scene."

This being the case, he could not have acted more unwisely, for at his cruel words, a sense of desolation and despair ineffable filled the young countess's heart—all the pent-up anguish of the day burst forth at once. Wildly she seized his arm, and bending her face upon it, burst into passionate shrieks and hysteric sobs.

Captain Trevanion, disgusted and ashamed, for the only thing he dreaded was the being made ridiculous, rudely dragged away his arm and coldly placed her in a chair.

The ladies closed round her with fans and smelling-bottles; and she gradually suppressed her shrieks, her alternate sobs, and shouts of wild maniac laughter, and looking timidly up at her self-raised tyrant, and catching the cold vengeance of his glance, she forced herself to be quiet.

But the old earl, who owed Captain Trevanion many an old grudge, and a new one for having carried off Rosalie, reeled to his wife, and said—

“I’m—not—the—blind—bat—you take me for, my lady. What the deuce—can’t Walter waltz with a pretty girl without you’re showing these tantrums? I know ye, madam—and I know your tricks! There have been eyes upon you—you never dreamt of—and know, my young Countess of Tunbridge, there’s such a thing as divorce—and such a place as Doctors’ Commons.”

As he spoke in a hissing whisper, audible to all present, the terrified gaze which the young countess had fixed on his maudlin yet malicious eye, and his quivering and purple cheeks, grew glassy and death-like: an ashy paleness spread over her whole face; her form collapsed, and she fell heavily on the floor at his feet in a swoon, so like death, that for some minutes, and till a neighbouring surgeon arrived, all began to fear she had actually expired.

It was found necessary to open a vein in the temple, as symptoms of congestion of the brain were manifest.

Mrs. Orde and Rosalie, who were too pure themselves easily to suspect frailty in another, attributed the young countess’s deadly swoon, not to terror or the workings of conscience, but to the brutal and tipsy insults of the earl; and as they, gently ministering to her, and hanging over her recumbent form, marked the awful ravages that dissipation and, alas! unholy passion, and its inevitable retribution and remorse had made in one a little year ago so radiant in bloom—so gay, so glad—so rich in all the pride of youth and beauty—a loathing of her brutal lord, and, alas! misplaced sympathy for her filled their breasts.

They gladly acquiesced in the surgeon’s request that she should not be removed that night; they hastened the departure of the earl, who, sobered in some degree by the event, was muttering curses, scowling, and pondering, and calculating in his own selfish heart the chance of his being free again, and determining, if he ever did recover his liberty, to guard and keep the precious boon. As for Captain Trevanion, he availed himself of the bustle and excitement to try to establish a sort of friendship

with Rosalie, of whom we rejoice to say, since "slighted love is sair to bide," he was painfully enamoured.

The close of this evening left on Mrs. Orde's mind a still greater horror and distaste than before of "grand matches," *mariages de convenances*, and unions promoted by interest and ambition. In the solitude and darkness of her chamber, she saw her once bright and beautiful niece, Louisa, wasted, worn, and shrunk; she saw her wretched sister-in-law writhing under Crève-cœur's lash; she recalled the Baronne de Saint Felix's looks of scorn and her little husband's sly and furtive glances of unutterable hate; and then a thousand vague fears for Jeannetta filled her breast; and her only solace was the recollection that love was the basis of that union, at least on Jean-netta's side, and seemingly on the count's.

Rosalie seemed to have a fair prospect of rational happiness, and she herself, through her sister-in-law's cupidity and treachery (though not, alas! through any wisdom of her own), had escaped that vilest of thraldoms—a union with a bad and brutal man.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE HONEYMOON.

THE soft light of the honeymoon still shed its silver radiance over the young Count and Countess de Mont-faucon, and in their rapid transit from one place of interest to another, they had not yet experienced that *ennui*, that *lourdeur*, as the French so graphically call it, which so often steals over a newly-wedded pair shut up in a travelling chariot together the live-long day, and becoming gradually and painfully aware that even a bride and bridegroom may have too much of each other's society. But they had not imprisoned themselves in a travelling chariot, nor bound themselves to follow implicitly the directions of a guide-book. They had glided up the lovely Rhine in the "leafy month of June," and the count, who knew it well, had enchanted Jeannetta by all its lovely legends, and arranged so that they should tarry

wherever he knew that there was something more to interest them than a *table-d'hôte* crowded with English.

Jeannetta, as she sat at his side, her hand clasped in his, and her head on his shoulder, felt, in its wildest intensity, all the happiness this world can give—a loving bride; and if the very union which, while it binds woman's heart more closely to her lord's, often makes his a little impatient of the tie, had increased Jeannetta's devotion and a little impaired the count's, she was too entirely engrossed by her own love as yet to notice the dreadful change, which yet to a closer observer began, alas! to manifest itself in a thousand minute and miserable particulars.

They were now settled for a few weeks in a beautiful château on the banks of the Lake of Constance. To Jeannetta, to roam hand in hand with her beloved through the enchanting country, to row on the crystal lake, to read with him, or to tell him "tales of love" or poetry—love's sweetest language—to sing with him, to play accompanied by him, and to try (vain effort in her opinion) to transfer to ivory (meant for a bracelet clasp) his features in miniature—all this to her was fulness of joy, of interest, of rapture unspeakable!

Not so—alas! not so the count!

"Man's love is of man's life, a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence!"

The first symptom that might have alarmed her was a frivolous excuse not to attend her to the Protestant church one evening.

"You do not mean, Gonzalve, that I must go alone?" she said.

"No, dearest," said the count, embracing her almost absently; "take your Phœbe with you. I have a mind to go to the reading-room to-day and see if I can make, or pick up, an acquaintance or two to enliven us a little!"

"You will not go to the reading-room on Sunday, Gonzalve!" said Jeannetta, turning very pale and swallowing her tears. "Why, they play cards and dice, and dance!"

"So much the better—there is less mischief in that than often goes on under the garb of sanctity. Your church is a greater rendezvous for lovers, a greater thr

for flirtation and intrigue than the *salon*. Come, don't go to church this evening; but come with me to the *salon*!"

"Oh, Gonzalve, I should expect the roof to fall on my profane and renegade head were I so to spend my Sabbath evening!"

"Well then, *au revoir, ma belle*! I am not a Protestant, you know, so there is nothing profane in my going." And he was leaving the room, lightly kissing his hand to her.

She rushed towards him and caught his arm:—

"No, you are not a Protestant, beloved—but you are a Catholic, you are a Christian!" (The count laughed a little quiet laugh.) "You cannot think it right to close the Lord's day with folly and frivolity; you will come and thank our heavenly Father on our bended knees for all the blessings of our perfect love, our happy, happy marriage. Nay, then, if you will not come to the church with me, I will go to vespers with you. The same great God, the same blessed Redeemer, is worshipped in both; and my prayer, full of gratitude and faith, will bring down a blessing, even if breathed in the presence of that Virgin I love and reverence, but cannot worship, and those saints I recognise as good and holy men, but not as deities themselves."

While Jeannetta spoke, the count caressed her, played with her hair, patted her cheek, and said:—"Sweet enthusiast! however absurd bigotry may be in men, it is 'beautiful exceedingly' in a lovely woman, and not beautiful only, but most excellent: there is no safeguard for you, sweet, soft, and frail ones, like an entire belief in all we secretly smile at; and no inducement to a woman to be pure below like the fantastic notion that she will be rewarded on high!"

"Gonzalve! oh, Gonzalve!" shrieked Jeannetta, ghastly pale, and tears rushing from her eyes, "what do I hear? Oh, unsay those horrible words—secretly smile at the divine truths of the Christian religion—fantastic the belief in future rewards or punishments! Alas, do not destroy my peace and break my heart with the horrible conviction that you are not a believer! Oh, Gonzalve, I would sooner die!"

"Jeannetta," said the count, impatient of her tears, nettled at her reproaches, and angry at her presuming to censure and upbraid, "what I am, I am. Had you wished for a husband to join you in hourly prayers, to plod with you morning and evening to church, to sing psalms, and give up all the joys of this world in a vain hope of greater in one that will never come, you should have married your puritanical Methodist of a lover, Gerard Esdaile; as it is, I must tell you at once, I am of a temper very impatient of rebuke and reproach, and that I never yield a point or suffer the will of another to control my own. Let it be enough for you, Countess de Montfaucon, that I do not interfere with your (forgive me) bigoted devotion to the superstitions of your country, your sex, and your race; until I do, be contented, and do not, by injudicious interference with me, rouse me to measures my pride and wrath may suggest, but which my love for you would make me loathe and dread! Think of what I have said, Jeannetta, and when we meet again, let me see a smiling lip and an unruffled brow."

So saying, he kissed her cold cheek and was gone! Poor, poor Jeannetta! what floods of anguish pour in upon her heart as those angels, faith and confidence, spread their wings and flee from that temple of love! Jeannetta, unused to ought but homage, tenderness, and passionate love, finds herself for the first time slighted, wounded, disparaged, disregarded, and defied. She threw herself on the floor in the self-abandonment of her grief and wept aloud.

How constantly during her bright and blissful honeymoon had her loving and grateful heart sent to her lips the words, "I am too nobly blest, what have I done to deserve such happiness?"—and now, white and quivering, they slowly murmur in words broken by sobs: "How wretched, how miserable is my fate! what have I done to be thus blighted and bowed down?" And as she rocked herself to and fro in her unbearable distress, above her own wounded love, and above the ruins of her faith and trust seemed traced, in words of fire that scorched her glaring eye-balls, "He is no Christian, and I, oh Father! I am unequally yoked with an unbeliever!"

Ah, at this terrible crisis—not merely a discovery

awful, but that dreadful epoch in the history of wedded love, a first quarrel—how did Rosalie's warning rush back upon her memory, and Gerard Esdaile, with his bright, Christian faith, and his devoted, slighted love—but no—no—no—Gonzalve is her husband, and it is treason to him to give one thought or vague regret to another. Poor, poor Jeannetta! long, long she knelt and wept, her face in her hands, and buried both in the downy cushions of a *bergère* near her, and the bright sun of Switzerland retired to his canopy of purple and rubies and gold in the west, and twilight stole into the room—light steps were heard, and Jeannetta started to her feet. It must be he. It must be Gonzalve come back to unsay his cruel words—come back to comfort—to atone. Alas, alas! the lover had done that long ago—expect no such concession from the husband, poor Jeannetta!

No, it was Phœbe, who came to tell her mistress that the bells of the Protestant church were ringing, and to know whether she meant to go.

"Yes, Phœbe," said Jeannetta, turning away her face, and assuming as cheerful a voice as she could. "Yes, Phœbe, get my bonnet and shawl; you shall come with me!"

Ah, as she drew near a glass to smooth her dishevelled hair, her ruffled dress, and marked her eyes red and swollen, her cheeks blistered with tears, her white lips and her trembling hands, her impatient spirit would urge the question, "How have I deserved all this?"

A still, small voice—perhaps the voice of conscience—answered, "You have loved the creature better than the Creator. You have made an idol and must find it clay. You have lightly chosen one of whose faith in the Crucified you were never fully assured; and by your dark idolatry of a fellow worm, you have dared and angered Him who is a jealous God!"

And Jeannetta humbly stole to church, attended only by Phœbe, and for the first time since she had known the count, she gave a sad but undivided attention to the service, for the first time since earthly love had filled her heart.

She returned home comforted, cheered, as all must be who pray in earnest; and hope, a bright hope, of being

the blessed instrument of Gonzalve's conversion filled her heart. Unwilling to reproach or distress him by the sight of tears, she turned into the beautiful gardens of the château, and paced up and down a favourite avenue, where she had been wont to roam by the hour, hand in hand with him. The silver moon, sweet lamp of heaven! rose to light and cheer her; and she was about to return to the house as the supper-hour struck, and she fancied the cool night-breeze must have effaced the traces of her grief, and thought, moreover, she heard the sound of horses and of wheels, announcing Gonzalve's return,—when suddenly a blaze of light filled both the windows of the *salon* and the *salle à manger*. She stepped softly on to the flower-beds under the casement and looked into the rooms.

In the *salon*, Gonzalve stood in animated conversation with the Capitaine Crèveœur, the Baron de Saint Felix, and three other gay and moustached officers and fashionably-dressed ladies. Suddenly, a valet announced supper, and Jeannetta saw the count, with obsequious majesty, and a grace that struck her jealous heart as almost tender in its courtesy, offer his arm to a stately brunette, whom she instantly recognised as the Baronne de Saint Felix; and then the beaux followed his example, and the gay party repaired to the *salle à manger*, where Jeannetta saw a handsome supper spread and her own place vacant.

Noiselessly Jeannetta entered the house, and slunk, with a heart bursting with mortified pride, wounded tenderness, raging jealousy, and vanity outraged, into her own room. After a few minutes, that seemed an age, Phœbe came to say:—

“The count requested the countess to come down to supper and welcome some dear old friends.”

Jeannetta sent word she had retired to her room very unwell.

In spite of this intimation, ere long, noisy shouts of laughter and choruses of songs wounded her ear.

Jeannetta sat alone in the dark—dark without, dark within—tears silently stealing down her cheeks, and hysterical spasms contracting her throat and chest. At length his step was heard, a bright light in the adjoining bedroom made her eyes ache—Jeannetta started un-

tending to secure the door of her dressing-room, but reached it just as the count opened it.

They stood face to face: he looking unusually animated, flushed, and a smile still on his lips—Jeannetta, the pallid, tear-stained incarnation of despair.

"What has happened?" asked the count, really alarmed.

"Happened! oh, Gonzalve!" said Jeannetta, hiding her face on his bosom.

"What is it, darling?" asked the count. "Haste, love, to tell me; they are waiting for me!"

"Go, then!" said Jeannetta. "They are of more importance than I am!"

"Nonsense! Come, my proud angel beauty cannot be so mere a woman as to indulge a petty jealousy! Come down and see Crèveœur and Saint Felix, with three other very agreeable men and their wives; I met them all at the *salon*, and thought, as we were getting rather dull, they would enliven you."

"Go, Gonzalve, say no more! Your thinking so is quite enough."

"Then you will not come down?"

"No! no! no!"

"Well then, dearest, you seem so ill and so chilly, I must insist on your going to bed. I will send Phœbe to you. Come, promise me you will go to bed at once—I shall not let them stay late!"

"Yes, I will go to bed, Gonzalve," said Jeannetta.

"There's my sweet girl!" said the count; and kissing her pale cheek, he was going, when he suddenly came back and said:—"Oh, Jeannetta, I forgot what I came for. Do you know of any cards or dice? There must be some in the house, I should think!"

"I know of none, Gonzalve," said Jeannetta, coldly; "and if I did, I would not, by telling you where to find them, help you to disgrace yourself and desecrate the Sabbath!"

"Little puritanical fool!" muttered the count, hurrying off. "Blind little bigot!"

And Jeannetta heard him.

One of the company had cards and dice, *quite by accident*, in his pocket. It was bright morning before

they broke up, and then the count insisted on their taking breakfast.

Jeannetta awoke, after having wept and watched till dawn—woke, and found herself alone. Alone! alas, her heart prophesied, that she should henceforth be for ever alone! Presently she heard the count's foot on the stairs; he went into his own dressing-room. Jeannetta was ashamed of the intense anxiety with which she awaited his leaving his closet and entering hers.

His door opened—she started to her feet—he passed by and went down stairs. For a few minutes she remained with hands clasped and lips apart, and then she rang for Phœbe to go and tell the count she wanted to see him. Phœbe returned with the news that he was gone to Constance in company with the guests.

"Shall I dress your hair, my lady?" asked Phœbe; and mechanically Jeannetta took her seat at her toilet table.

There, for the first time since her marriage, no fresh bouquet awaited her.

Every morning, the count, a very early riser, had made it his first care to cut the choicest flowers and place them, glittering with morning dew, on her table.

The bouquet of the day before, which she had worn till night, and in her anguish had forgotten to put in water, lay on the floor drooping and sad; it had already begun to pale and fade away; Jeannetta covered it with kisses, bedewed it with tears, and pressed it to her bosom.

"La! my lady!" said Phœbe, "only think, you've been married a month this blessed morning. How it did pour this day last month, didn't it, my lady? and just look at the sun now. It's fit to blind one!"

As she spoke, she drew aside the curtains of white lace and rose brocade, and the garish light of day dispelled the last silvery illusion of the honeymoon, "making the cold reality too real."

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE BRIDE OF A MONTH.

THE Bride of a month was alone, alone with a sickening sense of desolation, of desertion, of disenchantment. The day was bright and sunny without, though an easterly wind sent her from her window to the bright wood fire Phœbe kindled when she remarked how her mistress shivered, and how pale and ill she looked.

She experienced that all-pervading chill which the heart's first disappointment seems to send through the frame; a fretful restlessness now roused her to painful anger, now melted her into floods of self-pitying distress. Her head ached, her heart sank, her knees shook; neither the fire nor the shawls Phœbe threw about her had any power to warm her. Phœbe grew alarmed, and Jeannetta herself began to suspect that she was really and physically ill.

"Oh, that my lord were here!" sobbed Phœbe, as she felt the countess's rapid pulse, and marked the hectic of fever supply the place of the livid pallor of her cheeks. "Oh, I wonder where my lord is!"

These words—reminding Jeannetta of her sudden loneliness—her desolation—brought on a passionate fit of hysteric weeping, and Phœbe had just, by *sal-volatile* and all the prescribed remedies, overcome this emotion, when carriage-wheels were heard and Phœbe exclaimed, "Thank Heaven, my lord is come!"

And Jeannetta hastily brushed away her tears and tried to smile. But no; it was a note from the count, and it ran thus:—

"MY OWN BELOVED BRIDE.—We are at Crèveccœur's château, whence we propose taking a trip to Baden-Baden. The change will do you good, my own love; so set off immediately in the *calèche* I send. Bring Phœbe—whatever you will want yourself for a fortnight's absence, and my dressing-case, and the portmanteau not yet unpacked. The party will consist of Crèveccœur, who leaves his wife, your aunt, behind—I have not seen her, as she is, he says, not ill, but sulky—of the Baron and
"me de Saint Felix, a charming, intellectual, elegant

woman, who longs to see you again, and would be incomparable by the side of any one but my angel bride—three other pleasant men, with agreeable wives, prepare in high spirits to salute you and set out. I can only give you an hour to get ready—you will find us at Crèvecoeur's château, Blumenbourg.

“Your adoring

“GONZALVE.”

“Alas!” said Jeannetta, “I am too ill and too miserable for such gay company. A mother who has lost her only darling feels as I do. No, no, let him go—let him enjoy life with others. Sick at heart, and ill in body, I cannot cope with this elegant, this brilliant baronne—my jealous anguish would provoke my tears, and my misery reproach thee, Gonzalve. Go—go without me. From the dream of a life I have waked to disappointment—in solitude, in silence, and in prayer, I must seek, not happiness (idle word), but composure, but forgiveness!”

Jeannetta; with a swelling heart and eyes blinded by tears, ordered Phœbe to find the things the count required, and then she wrote in a trembling hand:—

“Your summons found me very ill, dear Gonzalve, and quite unequal, both in mind and body, to the gaieties you propose. I wish you all mirth and enjoyment in this excursion, and that it may be productive to you of that happiness which has for ever deserted the breast of your

“JEANNETTA.”

Having despatched this billet with the count's dressing-case and portmanteau, Jeannetta sank back into inaction, which would have been despair but for a hope that would arise, that when Gonzalve heard that she was ill, he would return on the wings of love and of remorse. How this might have been, had the count received her note, we will not say; probably, though vexed and disappointed, he would have hastened home; but the Baronne de Saint Felix, who had failed in all attempts to captivate Captain Trevanion, had transferred her partiality to the Count de Montfaucon. She was a daring and most unscrupulous person, and, fearing Jeannetta might write something that would prevent the count's accompanying the party to Baden-Baden, she waylaid the messenger, got poss

sion of the note, bribed him to silence, and conveyed to Gonzalve the intelligence that his countess preferred remaining at Constance and awaiting him there, and that "she wished them all a pleasant journey and a speedy return."

The baronne a little overreached herself in this message, and saw her error the moment she had committed it. This independence and indifference piqued the count into more tenderness than any passionate appeal could have produced. More than once he almost resolved to go and persuade her to join them; and being hurried out of this intention, he determined to stay only one day at Baden-Baden, and to write to Jeannetta by every post.

But they *did* set out; and the bride was left alone!

CHAPTER LXVIII.

LE RÉVEIL.

THE effect of this sudden fall from the summit of happiness to the depths of misery was too much for Jeannetta's constitution. She became seriously and dangerously ill; and Phœbe, in an agony of terror, called in an English doctor who happened to be at Constance.

This doctor, an elderly man, of much perception, and of sound religious principles, was very kind and very skillful. He soon did all that could be done towards mitigating the physical part of the evil; and having learnt from Phœbe, who was delighted to find an Englishman to talk to, much of the history of the young Countess de Montfaucon, he guessed pretty nearly the whole state of the case; he soothed her spirit, won upon her confidence, and at last induced her to do herself the great, great good of opening her heart to him. Indeed, from being merely the physician of her body, Doctor Allworthy became, ere long, that of her soul. He roused her from the trance of despair into which she had fallen; he showed her that, by supinely sinking under a disappointment of her pride and her love, she was throwing away those pearls of price—her own and her husband's soul.

"If the passionate idolatry of COURTSHIP does not outlive the honeymoon," he gently said, "that is no reason why a rational and tender attachment should not spring up in its place to make the comfort and delight of WEDLOCK; there is often—forgive me, my dear comtesse—there is often more of egotism and selfishness than of generosity and devotion in the half-sullen regret, the half-morbid sense of injury, with which the bride sees that the bridegroom has discovered she is not an angel. While he was doubtful on that point," he added, laughingly, "he worshipped her; but when daily intercourse revealed daily faults, foibles, and imperfections, he knew it was a woman he had wedded; and if temper, tears, reproaches, hysterics, sullenness, and gloom forthwith supply the place in her of angel sweetness, tenderness, and peaceful joy, he will think her a very commonplace woman too!"

Jeannetta listened; and those truths, though bitter, were salutary.

"With regard," he added, "to the far, far more important discovery in either party, that the other is not a believer, I grant it is enough, in its first terrific shock, to make the frame give way and the reason reel; but reflection tells us 'a light has sprung up for those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.' 'The unbelieving husband shall be sanctified by the believing wife, when he beholds your chaste conversation coupled with fear.' But the wife of the unbeliever, if she would win her lord to believe, must show the practical effect of religion in her own character; not in impatience, anger, resentment, and gloom; but in cheerfulness, even under that greatest of disappointments—that of the heart—in humility, in charity, in contentment. Nothing serves so much to reclaim and convince the infidel as the practical result of Christianity on the conduct and heart of a dear one under trial."

With such conversation as this did Dr. Allworthy set before Jeannetta her heart as it was, and the real state of the case between her and Gonzalve, robbed of all false sentiment and tinsel ornament.

She had been adored—that bright, but vain epiphany passed. No woman is adored twice by the same man; but she might be loved still, and for ever.

And by that love she might gain influence, and win reverence, and awaken and convince; and, oh! greatest of joys and of triumphs, save her husband's soul!

Jeannetta saw that she had much to do, and that she must shake off this selfish grief, this galling sense of wounded pride. The very effort was salutary, and when able to leave her room, Dr. Allworthy, with his amiable daughter Lucy—a good, simple, earnest, Christian girl—persuaded her to let him drive her about the beautiful environs. She recovered much of her bloom of beauty and elasticity of spirit, and the proud bride, who had been so idolized in courtship, patiently awaited, in the sixth week of her marriage, the return of him whom she resolved to expect, not as an adoring lover, but as that sacred partner of her life God had given her, who was entitled to all her tenderness, her kindness, and her care, and whom it was her duty to lead to Christianity, by showing him the practical result of it in her own conduct.

CHAPTER LXIX.

LADY BEAUCHAMP CRÈVECŒUR.

JEANNETTA, with these new views, and under this new and ennobling influence, was no longer entirely engrossed by self and selfish emotions.

On referring to her husband's note, she perceived that it was dated from Captain Crèveœur's abode, the Château Blumenbourg; and then, with a pang, she remarked that the count had not seen her wretched aunt, who was described as not ill, but sullen.

The dreadful scene at Oxford, which her mother had so vividly described, recurred to Jeannetta's mind, and filled it with a vague uneasiness, lest her miserable aunt, who was not of the Baden-Baden party, might be confined at Blumenbourg by the brutal Crèveœur's orders, and subjected to the grossest ill treatment, imprisonment, and want.

She mentioned her anxieties to Dr. Allworthy, who, while laughing at them as romantic, proposed at once that his Lucy should drive them in her pony phaeton to all at Blumenbourg.

It was a bright and genial day; the sun shone as he seldom shines in England: a soft breeze rippled the lake; and Jeannetta, the bride of seven weeks, the proud, the devoted, and the forsaken, felt the influence of the enchanting scene, revelled in the hope of brighter days, and enjoyed her young existence and the physical luxury of being.

They had some difficulty in reaching the Château Blumenbourg, which was much further off than they had imagined, and placed on the summit of steep and rugged hills.

When they did reach the gates, they were struck by the forlorn and desolate aspect of the place, which, with the boastful title of a castle, had not any of the comforts found in an English cottage.

There was a moat and a drawbridge, but the water was dried up, the bridge broken; pigs and sheep fed on what was once a "pleasaunce;" beautiful shrubberies had become tangled thickets. Flora and Pomona, "statues from their base o'erthrown," lay broken and moss-grown in the long grass; the principal rooms were used as barns and granaries; poultry strutted about the fine old hall, and roosted in the music gallery and among the banners and the coats of armour.

"He can never have left an English lady alone in this desolate ruin," said Lucy Allworthy.

"Oh, impossible! it is fit only for the toad, the bat, and the owl!"

Jeannetta said nothing; when she remembered under what circumstances her wretched aunt had been heard of last, she thought the best thing for her would be to be left alone in any place where her wretched tyrant was not likely to molest her.

It was some time before they could find any one of whom to make inquiries—at last a child, after being closely cross-examined, admitted that an English lady was confined in a part of the castle, and that she was not only very ill, but not quite in her right mind.

"My poor, poor aunt!" said Jeannetta, weeping; "either her wicked husband has driven her mad, or for purposes of his own, pretends that she is so."

On inquiring whether she could see her, the ch

"no;" for her father and mother, who had charge of her, were gone to a *fête* a few miles off, and had locked her door.

While they spoke, Jeannetta saw a lean, pale, and emaciated face appear at the barred windows of an opposite part of the quadrangle, a skeleton hand grasped the rusty bars, and a cry of supplication and of despair reached them. Jeannetta cried aloud, "It is my aunt!"

And the miserable creature, recognising her niece, extended her arms and uttered cry upon cry.

Rapidly our party crossed the quadrangle and rushed up stairs; the door was locked, but with a poker, with which he had armed himself, *en passant*, Mr. Allworthy forced the door open. There, in a miserable room, carpetless, though the floor was of bricks—a curtainless bed, damp walls, two wooden stools, and a table, on which stood a jug of water and some coarse bread, stood Crève-cœur's wretched victim, once the gay, the proud, the dainty Lady Beauchamp. She wore no cap on her wild and, alas! silver hair—she, whose tresses had been, till her ill-omened marriage, so carefully preserved and so judiciously arranged as to be "a marvel and a secret," and whose head-dress was always the perfection of Parisian taste and novelty.

An old wrapper was the only dress that hung about the shrunken form, erst so richly robed; a ragged rope round her waist, and another at the bed-post, showed that she had burst her bonds; and a cat-o'-nine-tails and a straight waistcoat hung on pegs on the wall revealed something more of the occasional secrets of her prison-house.

"Jeannetta, oh! my kind, good Jeannetta!" she cried, bursting into tears, "be not afraid of me! Wild as I look, I am not mad! He is trying to make me so!—but you are come at last, and you will save me!—say you will save me—take me away—now, now that he is not here, and that my cruel keepers are from home. Take me at once!" she cried, throwing herself on her knees, clinging to Jeannetta's dress, and tears pouring down her cheeks. "Oh, if I have ever wished you or yours any ill, or sought to raise or benefit myself or my daughters at your expense, or harboured any mean, or

mischievous, or interested thoughts in my breast, I have been basely, brutally, cruelly punished. The wretch to whom I have fallen a prey, but for my own weak and avaricious folly would have made a victim of one much dearer to you. But haste, take me away!"

"Where are your things, my poor aunt?"

"I have no things but these; the fiend has sold all! He announces that I am mad, and this very day I had a letter from him, declaring he will never release me till I empower him to sell out the rest of my stock; I have only two thousand left, and he is resolved to obtain that, and then I suppose he will murder me, or would have done so. But now, heaven has sent a guardian angel in answer to my prayers. And yet to think what that man seemed in courtship!" sobbed the wretched woman.

Jeannetta shuddered. She remembered that both were brides, wooed according to their different tastes and views, and both had already learnt that courtship is a poor preparation for wedlock, and that the lover's conduct does not enable woman to form any estimate of the husband.

"Take me, take me away at once!" urged the poor victim of Crèveœur's cruelty. "Think if my dreaded tyrant should revive—think if his brutal servants should return!"

"There is certainly not a moment to be lost!" said Mr. Allworthy.

"Then let us lend your aunt what we can spare of our own clothes to equip her," said Lucy Allworthy, taking off her own shawl. Jeannetta did the same by her own bonnet.

The child had returned to the yard to play with the poultry.

Dr. Allworthy, perceiving that Lady Beauchamp's trembling knees could not bear her, lifted her skeleton form in his arms and placed her in the carriage.

When the poor wretch found herself actually saved, and rapidly borne away from her terrible prison, she fainted on Jeannetta's bosom.

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"I can only *lend* it, as mamma gave it to me—and though I wear Gonzalve's in preference, I value my first very much."

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she was old, desolate, and, but for her niece, the defenceless victim of a villain in a foreign land. Lady Beauchamp, or rather Crèveccœur, having at length satisfied her vanity and cupidity, requested permission to send Phœbe into Constance on a private errand of vital importance.

The next morning the result of this errand might be traced in Lady Crèveccœur's appearance; long jetty ringlets, with lilies and roses to match, and all that crinoline and eider-down could do to convert a skeleton into a Hebe, betrayed the nature of Phœbe's secret mission.

Lady Crèveccœur, who arrived, looking a broken-down old maniac, in a flannel gown, gray hair, and parchment skin, without money or luggage, silent and trembling, departed in high spirits with the family who were travelling to England, an *élégant* of fifty, with a purse tolerably filled, a dressing-case, several boxes, and a large trunk! She was so full of her own renovated charms and her importance, that she scarcely thanked Jeannetta for her generous protection and bounty; but spent the last few moments in comparing her own bridal *trousseau* with that she now carried off—and in prophesying for Jeannetta a fate similar to her own. The last glance she gave was not at the noble-minded niece who had so angelically returned good for evil, but at the glass in which her pink bonnet and almost bridal dress figured so gaily; and her last words were,—

“Well, dearest, you have done all for the best, and certainly he has proved such a brute he deserves to lose me; but could he see me now, I dare say he would be at my feet again! How well your style suits me—the fact is, I always dressed much too old for my style and appearance! Oh, Crèveccœur, how could you use *me* so?”

However, she had not neglected every possible precaution to prevent Crèveccœur's tracing her; and Jeannetta, who dreaded the villain for her aunt as much as she did for herself, bent her bright mind to every consideration that could secure that aunt's safety.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE RETURN.

It was a great relief to Jeannetta to be quite rid of her egotistical and selfish aunt; but the constant attention she had required had occupied her thoughts, and therefore been beneficial to her mind.

The day after her aunt's departure, the Count Gonzalve De Montfaucon and the whole party returned.

Jeannetta was drawing when they arrived, looking delicate certainly, but exquisitely lovely, in a simple, but very becoming, morning dress. As she had never been parted from her Gonzalve before, she had not formed any idea, even in her own mind, of the flood of emotions with which she should welcome him back. Intent on her occupation, she was not aware that he stood in her boudoir—for he had the delicacy to leave his guests in the *salon*—watching her intently for some moments.

Her grace and beauty took him (after a fortnight's absence) a little by surprise—he had forgotten how very lovely and queen-like she was. Her entire and almost happy composure surprised more than it pleased him; he had expected she would have felt his absence more; and though he had been prepared to be annoyed at her reproaches, and vexed by red eyes, pale cheeks, tears, silence, and jealous wrath, he was a little piqued to find she could amuse herself so wisely, and look so charming and so contented without him. The discovery, while it nettled his vanity, increased his love and respect a hundredfold. No woman beginning to lose her empire over the heart of a man ever recovers it by tears, complaints, or reproaches.

When at length Jeannetta looked up and saw her Gonzalve gazing at her with much of the impassioned admiration of the long ago, the orient blush of quick surprise was succeeded by a deadly pallor—tears gushed from her eyes, and rushing into his arms, she sobbed upon his bosom.

For an hour or more, Gonzalve forgot his guests. They had so much to tell each other—not of what had

happened—not of what others had done—but what they had thought—had felt.

Then wonder at the missing letters, and conjectures as to what each must have thought of a silence so cruel, and then Gonzalve remembered his friends, and begged Jeannetta to welcome them.

"They will not stay long, beloved one," he said, apologetically, "but let them see what an angel has condescended to dwell with me! I know they think you are jealous, captious, morose; let them see you as you are, and marvel at my happiness!"

Jeannetta, to oblige Gonzalve, rapidly made an elegant toilet, and received them with the most cordial and graceful courtesy—even the wretched Crèveœur himself, though she could not meet his bold gaze without inward horror, or touch his cruel hand without a shudder.

Her aunt had bound her by so solemn a promise not to mention her or her escape to Gonzalve, that Jeannetta was obliged to conceal the horrible tale of Crèveœur's brutality and her aunt's rescue. When she made the promise, she little knew how painful a restraint to a wife is her first secret from her husband; how many evasions, misrepresentations, and prevarications foreign and odious to her frank nature it would entail upon her; and above all, how impossible it was for her to instil into her husband's mind her own horror of Crèveœur, and get him dismissed accordingly, unless she could have told her husband the dreadful tale of his villany. As it was, she was obliged to tolerate his presence, because she could give no reason for her disgust and dislike. He had not been to the château, and was yet in ignorance of his wife's escape; and he added constantly to Jeannetta's scorn and hatred of him by pretending anxiety about her health, shamming affection for her person, and giving false accounts of the unsettled state of her mind—"which made him," he added, and the monster took out a handkerchief and pretended to weep, "keep away from his own dear home and beloved partner, because the physicians all agreed that the presence of those most dear, under ordinary circumstances, aggravated to an alarming degree every violent symptom."

The feelings with which Jeannetta heard all thi

be imagined; but news had reached her of the safe arrival of her aunt in her native land, and mingled with her horror and disgust was a sense of triumph and of comfort in having outwitted the wretch and secured her aunt's safety.

The party at the château of the Montfaucons' now consisted only of Crèveœur and the Baron and Baronne de Saint Felix.

The baronne pretended a devoted affection and enthusiastic admiration for Jeannetta; but many a glance at the count, a half-smothered sigh, and an indirect but flattering inuendo, which she fancied Jeannetta too unsophisticated and unsuspecting to notice, did nevertheless awaken in the young countess's breast a vague jealousy and instinct distrust, and prevented her ever reciprocating the baronne's enthusiastic caresses or believing in her friendship. In point of mind, beauty, manners, accomplishments, elegance, and powers of conversation, Juliana, Baronne de Saint Felix, was not to be compared to Jeannetta, Comtesse de Montfaucon; but then, she had for the count that charm which no wife, however lovely or gifted, can have, and which with many men is the greatest of all—novelty! She had not Jeannetta's mind, but she had a good deal of ready wit, and a flow of language which with some passed for eloquence. She was in high health and high spirits; she always was happy when she had an object to gain; and her object was, the cruel, the wicked, and the worse than useless one, of winning the love of the husband of the woman she pretended to call her friend!

Jeannetta, disappointed, anxious, ill at ease, finding it impossible to lead her still adored Gonzalve to one serious thought about religion, tormented by a vague jealousy, lost her dignified serenity, her quiet sense of happiness, her sweet and serene composure; she grew nervous, fretful, irritable, uncertain; she lost her exquisite bloom, her *embonpoint*, her confidence in herself.

Pale, wasted, and dressed not with her wonted exquisite care and taste, but in whatever Phœbe put out for her, she, incomparably superior as she really was, suffered the wily baronne to gain an undue advantage; for a mournful, moping, self-neglecting beauty, however perfect, is no

match for a tolerably pretty woman exquisitely dressed, making the utmost of every charm, and sparing no pains, no art, to please and to captivate.

Of all the weapons with which woman is armed to subdue her tyrant, the most irresistible is animation! This the baronne possessed in the highest degree, just as it seemed to have deserted Jeannetta entirely. The baronne was ever ready for all excursions, all amusements—Jeannetta, like most women jealous for the first time, would do nothing; and yet was stung to the soul if others, after vainly urging her to join them, went without her. What anguish it was to the still-adoring bride, after having almost pettishly refused to ride or drive with them, to see Gonzalve ride out *tête-à-tête* with the baronne—to mark his anxiety about her safety, his admiration of her daring horsemanship—to see him draw near her horse as he once did poor Jeannetta's, and to fancy he was looking at Juliana with that look of ineffable tenderness she knew so well, or whispering to her words which she would gladly die to hear again with the happy faith with which she had once heard them!

"True," she would murmur, "I would not go with them, and I answered him fretfully, I fear; but I did not believe he wanted me to go; I believe he prefers a *tête-à-tête* with her. He is able to go without me; he can bear to leave me here, ill, dejected, and alone! How he looked into her bold, upturned eyes, so radiant with pleasure and admiration of him, and, alas! for all I know, with love of my husband. Audacious, insolent intruder! why is she here? I will affront her, I will tell her I want to invite other guests—she shall go, I will be rid of her! But, no, no," she added, tears stealing down her cheeks, and her mood changing from anger to sorrow; "of what use is her going if his heart goes with her? I would rather she were here, much as I loathe her presence, than have her a thousand miles off if I thought his thoughts and wishes accompanied her. What shall I do—shall I try to be lively, amiable, amusing? She is kind and playful and talks to him, and jests and sports with him, and dresses to please him, and exerts herself to amuse him; come, it is my duty to do all this, I too will dress, I will sing, dance, play. Alas, alas! how

can I when my heart is full of tears? I will summon Phœbe, and dress as I was wont to do."

With a forced spirit and an artificial energy the wretched young creature began her toilette; but when Phœbe, by her desire, brought a dress the count had admired in the first weeks of the marriage, and fitted it on with many tactless remarks about her lady's loss of flesh and colour, and Jeannetta saw how it hung about her once fine form, and how ill and pallid its azure hue made her appear, she buried her face in her hands, and, while tears forced themselves through her fingers, she sobbed, "The outward garb is nothing, I will never dress gaily again—I seem in this attire still more unlike myself, and more than ever a wreck. Phœbe, give me my dark silk again; it suits me best."

And Phœbe, much to her mortification, saw her mistress take off the gay blue brocade, and don her high dark silk dress of cypress green, when she knew that the baronne was going to appear in all the witchery of Indian muslin, a gold girdle, and gold ornaments.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE MYSTERY.

It was while things were going on thus, and Jeannetta growing daily more ill in body and dejected in mind, that one day the baronne took up *Galignani's Messenger* and said, "Now see, my lovely and beloved comtesse, what reliance is to be placed on public reports of the doings and whereabouts of the great. Listen. 'That enterprising traveller and accomplished nobleman, the young, handsome, and eccentric Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon, after three years spent in exploring the East, is returned to Europe, and is now making the tour of Switzerland. We believe on the 10th he is expected at Constance!'"

"Absurd!" said Jeannetta. "What can they mean?"

"What ails you, count, dear—dearest!—I mean, comtesse, look at your husband—see, he faints! Oh,

my God! what ails him!" and she darted towards him; but Jeannetta had already rushed to his side and caught his drooping head on her shoulder.

"Bring water!" she cried. "Open the windows—here, help me to lay him on the sofa!"

The baronne did as Jeannetta ordered her; both were very pale, but Jeannetta's emotion nerved her to act; the baronne's after a few moments ended in a fit of trembling and hysterics.

The cold water, the air, and the recumbent posture restored the count to consciousness. The baronne was sobbing and shrieking: Jeannetta, deadly pale, but watching him intensely, stood beside him, bathing his brow and hands with Eau de Cologne, and using every remedy she could devise.

With a deep sigh he recovered his consciousness, and said from boyhood he had been subject to fits of giddiness or vertigo, and this was a mere nothing; he would go into the garden, where he saw the baron and the captain in close conference together.

He tenderly embraced Jeannetta and hurried out. The baronne, finding no notice was taken of her hysterics, rapidly recovered from them.

After an hour or two spent by the ladies in vain conjectures as to the cause of the count's indisposition, Jeannetta resolved to go in search of him. The count, the baron, and the captain, were gone out.

Jeannetta, distressed at not having seen her lord again after his alarming and extraordinary attack, felt all a fond wife's intense anxiety. The baronne, indignant at his having taken no notice of her hysterics, and angry at being left to amuse herself as she could, was in a flutter of fretful and mortified vanity.

Jeannetta was too much engrossed by her real and unselfish distress to notice her companion's discomposure and ill-humour. A sort of vague and mysterious dread of she knew not what had stolen into Jeannetta's heart; she could not be quiet; she paced up and down the room, then the terrace, and finally walked out on the Constance road to see if she could discern the approach of her Gonzalve.

The baronne, meantime, made an elaborate toilet, and

sent Phœbe in search of her mistress, to remind her that the dinner-hour was past.

Jeannetta, who had been for some time walking in the wet, quite unconscious that it rained, hastened back at this intimation, unwilling to be guilty of inattention or inhospitality.

Her long hair was damp and uncurled, her silk dress soiled and drooping. All she had patience to allow Phœbe to do was to remove her cloak and change her shoes; and then, pale and distracted, she sat down to do the honours as best as she could—but not to eat.

They formed a curious contrast—the neglected wife, and the admired guest! The comtesse, marble white, even to the very lips, cold, absent, trembling, silent—her damp, uncurled hair floating in jetty abundance on her shoulders, her lace collar, dress, and the rest of her attire damp and drooping, trying with a sickly smile to attend to her guest, but unable to swallow anything herself, owing to the hysterical spasm of her throat, which almost seemed to choke her. The baronne, dressed to perfection, her cheeks adroitly tinged, her manner cheerful and even gay, enjoying with the zest of a gourmand all the delicacies before her, and talking incessantly and gaily in a manner which, had Jeannetta not been too miserably absorbed to hear it, would almost have driven her distracted.

At length wheels were heard in the avenue: the comtesse rushed to the window thoughtless of self—the baronne turned to the glass to refresh her ringlets, smooth her dress, and see how her half-playful assumption of slighted tenderness and offended dignity became her.

It was some time before she had an opportunity of trying its effect on the count. Jeannetta, who did not feel under existing circumstances that happy, wife-like confidence which would have emboldened her to rush out at once to meet her husband, and exact a minute explanation of the causes of his swoon and of his absence, had quietly stolen to his study-door; but finding it fastened, and hearing voices in earnest conversation within, had hastened back to the dining-room. She had not been there long when a message came from her husband requesting

to see her directly, and at the same time he sent an apology to the baronne for his unintentional but inevitable absence from the dinner-table.

When Jeannetta reappeared, she was flushed, agitated, and evidently uneasy. She said she must ask the baronne to be so kind as to spend the evening with her in her boudoir, as the count had with him a gentleman on important business, and would not be at liberty to join them during the whole evening.

"And where are the other men?" asked the baronne, with ill-concealed temper,—“the baron and the captain; they had better join us, and then we can play *écarté*, or dance a polka, or have a little music.”

"They are concerned in this business."

"Very mysterious, indeed!" said the baronne—"business, indeed! I have no faith in business—men's only business is pleasure. Either they are going to play high, or else the stranger is some lady in disguise."

"Of course you are jesting," said Jeannetta, coldly, "or else I could not listen to anything which reflects on—"

"On your lord and master! Oh, of course not! No, no, I am only jesting! Men are great wretches certainly, but they're necessary evils—at least I'm so unused to spending an evening without some man to flirt with or to please, that I don't know what to do! one can't play or sing if there's no one to play or sing to. One can't dance alone, nor talk, except to gentlemen—I've no talent for talking to women. I declare, I'd rather have my own husband than no one; he does very well to torment and quarrel with!"

"Ah, but to-night," said Jeannetta, laughing at the baronne's curious and unexpected alternative—"to-night you cannot even have the baron. So make yourself comfortable on that sofa; take your French book; I'll order coffee, and while you read, dear baronne, I will write; I am in arrears with mamma, Rosalie, and all my correspondents."

Jeannetta took her desk and began to write—the baronne her French novel, stretched herself on the couch, and read till the tea and coffee were served. They then conversed a little together, and Jeannetta resumed her

letter-writing, the baronne her book; but missing the excitement of admiration and flirtation to which, from the age of fifteen, she had been nightly accustomed, she soon fell fast asleep.

Jeannetta, who, in her dejected state of mind, had felt strangely averse to write to her mother and Rosalie, had, since her last interview with her husband, felt less of sickening jealousy and forlorn hopelessness; and now, having broken the ice, she wrote rapidly page after page, and sheet after sheet, scarcely conscious of the flight of time. At length, the little French clock on the mantel-piece struck twelve, and Jeannetta sealed her last letter, and, more weary than she was aware of, stole to the window and looked out at the moon and the lake.

The scene without was so brightly calm, so silvery, and so enticing, that Jeannetta, perceiving that the baronne still slept soundly, unclosed the window, which opened on one of those galleries outside the house, common in Switzerland, and tripping lightly along the balcony, gained a flight of steps that descended into the garden. In order to reach her favourite walk by the lake, Jeannetta had to pass the dining-room, in which, by the light and the noise, she suspected her husband and his guests were at supper. The curtains were drawn, but one window was partly open, and through a chasm in the crimson drapery, Jeannetta could see the party. She had no intention, no wish to be a spy; but at the moment that she passed, her husband, her Gonzalve, arose at the head of the table to propose a health. The rich tones of his voice arrested her, and the majesty and beauty of his face and form, compelled her to gaze at him for a moment. He was evidently speaking in complimentary terms of the new guest, and as he gracefully bowed to him, Jeannetta's eyes followed her husband's, and fixed in some surprise on the fine figure and handsome face of a man strikingly like her Gonzalve—much darker, and not perhaps quite so tall, but in other respects so like, that strangers might under some circumstances have confounded the two. This likeness was extremely interesting to Jeannetta, and, connected with the mystery of the whole day, she examined the stranger with intense curiosity. Her husband had intimated to her that day, that he might ere

long put her devotion to the test, and ask her to leave all and go with him for a time to America, there to be all the world to each other; and though no suspicion of anything wrong in that husband arose in her loyal bosom, yet her conviction that some painful, and perhaps perilous mystery surrounded them was strengthened; and the extraordinary apparition of a man whose great likeness to the count proclaimed relationship, and whom he had neither named nor introduced to her, strengthened this conviction. Spell-bound, she listened, and with difficulty restrained a shriek of surprise when she heard her husband wind up an eulogy on the virtues, liberality, scientific acquirements, and daring exploits of their guest, and drink to the health and long life of one who, though only a distant relative, would, he hoped, become a near and dear friend, **THE COUNT GONZALVE DE MONTFAUCON!**"

For a moment, Jeannetta thought her husband must be mad; the next, she doubted the evidence of her own senses, and remained rooted to the spot, while the stranger, evidently a man of few words, thanked the count for the honour he had done him, expressed his happiness at having made the acquaintance of a cousin of whose existence, owing to his long absence abroad, he was scarcely aware, and drank the health of his host, **Monsieur de Montfaucon.**

After this, the guests seemed disposed to adjourn, and Jeannetta, bewildered and alarmed, she scarce knew why, hurried away to her favourite walk to ponder on this extraordinary and most mysterious occurrence.

For some time Jeannetta paced up and down the willow walk that bordered the lake, and found the more she tried to fathom or explain this mystery, the more did it puzzle and alarm her. While pondering on it, and determining to exact from her husband a full explanation, she heard steps and voices approaching, and, yielding to an instinct of alarm, she entered a small pavilion summer-house, and hid herself behind a door that had been taken off its hinges; this door was placed just before a bay window, shrouded by wooden Venetians, which commanded both a view of the willow path and the lake.

From her hiding-place Jeannetta could see the guest walking up and down the path in compa

Baron de Saint Felix and the Capitaine Crève-cœur. They stood after their last turn so close to the window from which Jeannetta watched them, that she could hear them planning an excursion on the lake for the morrow, and the stranger gaily anticipating the pleasure it would afford him. Just at that moment Jeannetta saw Crève-cœur step back behind the stranger guest, and—oh, horror! oh, villany! oh, Cain!—drawing out a dagger that gleamed in the moonlight, plunge it in the stranger's back! The assassin's blow was fatal—the stranger fell, stabbed to the heart. Jeannetta, quite unmindful of herself and her own peril, as a witness of the deed of blood, uttered a loud wild scream of horror, and fell lifeless to the ground.

She saw no more, but that wild shriek startled for a moment the murderers who were preparing to fling into the calm bosom of the lake the body of the murdered man; the little baron actually entered the pavilion where Jeannetta lay, and caught up some iron weights which had evidently been placed there on purpose. These they both, Crève-cœur and Saint Felix, fastened round the body of their victim, and then dragging him to the edge of the lake, they hurled his body into the water.

"And now if Montfaucon manages well," said Crève-cœur, "and gets safe off to America, after a few years there, he can come back and safely personate yon bloody lump of clay; and our income out of his fine estates is secured. But it's ill dwelling where these things have been done; that wild shriek—I take it of some hovering demon—and that fellow's death-rattle will haunt us here. England's the place for those who have anything to hide, besides, now I find that old aunty has escaped, I should like to get at her and give her a taste of my good knife. What say you? Shall we to England—the air of the Continent somehow seems to me to smell of the galleys. In England I was never haunted by the memory of our long years chained together there—you and I—and here I live in constant dread of being dragged back to that hard life of labour and of ignominy."

"Well, I prefer England," said the baron, "if you do not think we are in any danger about that little affair of Grimshaw at Brighton!"

"No—I think that was a causeless panic. I propose we escape to-night. But what will you do about your wife, baron?"

"Leave her with Montfaucon's—at least for the present. If she comes in my way, I have a remedy for that ill. But I've no time to attend to her now. Let's be off!"

'And with that deep and shuddering chill,
Which follows fast the deeds of ill,—

though they tried to brave it out, and laugh it off, the wretched murderers left the fatal spot.

It was some time after they were gone that Jeannetta recovered her consciousness; and to what horror and despair did she awake at last! However, no suspicion of her Gonzalve darkened her heart. He was deceived. He knew not what fiends he was fostering—what assassins he was harbouring—what a black return they were making for his trusting hospitality! She would tell him all, all the horrid secrets of that dreadful night, and they must be given up to justice.

Shivering with terror and with cold, Jeannetta tottered to the house, and reached, she scarce knew how, the room she had left.

The baronne was gone to her own chamber; and the clock struck three as Jeannetta entered.

With sickening horror she perceived on the light carpet bloody footprints. Unknown to herself she had trodden in the blood of the murdered man; the hem of her garment was saturated with it!

A loud shriek escaped her at the maddening sight. Phœbe, who had been awaiting her lady in her dressing-room, dozing in an arm-chair, rushed to her; and, terrified at the blood and the incoherent ejaculations and wild looks of her mistress, ran to call the count.

Of the tale Jeannetta told, he affected entire disbelief; and insisted that, being far from well, and having fallen asleep in the pavilion, she had dreamt a horrid dream. The evidence of the blood he scoffed at, saying the count and the baron had shot a mad dog that morning, and had thrown it in the lake.

This obstinate disbelief of course roused Jeanne almost to frenzy, and her looks, manner, and ex

language justified the count's apparent belief that she was delirious. Very ill and in a very high fever she certainly was; and unable to sit up, he bore her to bed, assisted Phœbe to undress her, and left her to her care.

Before morning she actually was delirious; and during her illness, her husband occupied himself partly in nursing her, and partly in preparations for the voyage to America which she had consented to undertake with him.

The letters to her mother and to Rosalie, which Jeannetta had written the night before her illness, the count (to relieve all anxiety in their hearts) had forwarded to them, and thus they felt comparatively easy on her account, for these letters were written in a spirit of composure and content to which poor Jeannetta had long been a stranger!

The Baronne de Saint Felix, whose husband was gone, having only announced that business called him away for a time, remained at the château, jealous of the count's devotion to his own wife and his attention to his all-important business; but at length, finding herself quite neglected and *de trop*, and Col. and Mrs. Mostyn (her parents) arriving at Constance, the baronne took up her abode with them; and the count, relieved by her absence, only awaited the convalescence of Jeannetta to set out immediately for the New World.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE.

WHILE Jeannetta was paying, in sorrow and disappointment, the price all must pay, sooner or later, for every earthly bliss and worldly triumph, Rosalie had accepted the frank hand and affectionate heart of Gerard Esdaile, and, certain of his faith, his principles, and the universal charity of his soul, has built her humble little fabric of domestic comfort and quiet happiness on no less solid a basis than the Rock of Ages.

Mrs. Orde, cured of vanity and of ambition, was de-

lighted with Rosalie's choice. Gerard Esdaile, it is true, was not the impassioned, romantic, and devoted lover to Rosalie that the count had been to Jeannetta; but he grew more and more tender, attentive, and deferential as the marriage-day drew near. In all preliminaries his whole object seemed to be his Rosalie's comfort, tastes, predilections; the slightest wish she had ever uttered was a law; he seemed to have treasured up every word she had ever said, every fancy that had ever escaped her. He evinced the most anxious and delicate consideration for her mother, and even for Aunt Jenny; and proposed and promoted every plan for furthering future intercourse and intimacy.

The count had shown no feeling of this kind. All his anxiety was to get his Jeannetta away, to have her all to himself! Mrs. Orde now understood the difference between passion and affection, and lamented, when it was too late, the short-sighted errors of her brief season of folly and vanity. In this repentance she was confirmed by the miserable result of her niece Louisa's interested marriage with the Earl of Tunbridge. He had commenced an action against her in the Ecclesiastical Court: the details of the suit, disgraceful to all parties, filled with grief and shame the hearts of all connected with the wretched young countess. The earl obtained his divorce, the heartless Captain Trevanion cast his victim off, and, broken hearted, bankrupt in fortune, name, and fame, the miserable creature, still under twenty, once more Miss Beauchamp, with a wretched pittance and a broken heart, stole into some ignominious seclusion—we hope and trust to repent—and die!

Violet Woodville had spent the interval between her departure from Brighton and Rosalie's wedding principally at the Ordes'; but she had paid one brief visit to her uncle and aunt at the old Manor House, because news had reached her that illness and pecuniary distress were pressing hard upon the kindhearted and eccentric old pair. It was a great relief to them to find she had been staying with Mrs. Orde—she still kept her professional career in the back-ground—and that she had seen Valentine, and knew that he was well.

His parents were aware that the rash boy had enlisted,

and were full of anxiety to buy him off, or rather supply a substitute. Violet, now a little more acquainted with the world and its ways, listened with a concealed smile to her uncle's wild and impracticable schemes for raising the necessary sum.

She had supplied the immediate and most pressing wants of her uncle and aunt out of a sum which Miss Jenny had insisted on her accepting; but this help, acceptable and timely as it was, was by no means adequate to the fast increasing difficulties of the old couple, or to the one engrossing desire of their hearts—the releasing Valentine from what they considered his degrading situation.

Violet had two or three letters from her old friend Merryweather, the manager, who could not forget the golden harvest he had reaped from Violet's genius and success. He offered her terms, comparatively so liberal, that the poor girl felt ashamed of inactivity when those who had been as parents to her were in such distress of mind and want of every kind. She resolved, then, after attending as bridesmaid at Rosalie's wedding, to accept the engagement Merryweather offered, and repair to Edinburgh to join him there.

And Violet's heart—ah, poor Violet!—she dared not look herself into that tomb of hope! First love, first, wild, passionate, and disappointed love, had folded his wings and slept under the shadow of that tomb; but one thought, one memory, one glance at the past would have awaked him; and then, all the forced peace of poor Violet's bosom would be gone for ever! It was only by denying herself the dangerous luxury of *thought*, and forcing herself to look forward and to act, that she could save herself from despair.

She had kept herself so secluded during the Ordes' stay at Brighton and since Jeannetta's wedding, and the impression conveyed by Patience of her having set sail for America was so general, that Colonel Pevensey, or, rather, the Earl of Chester—for to that dignity the death of his brother had promoted him—had lost all clue and all hope of discovering her retreat; but the passionate devotion of the only woman he had ever really loved, the only one who had ever loved him, *truly and for himself*

alone, haunted him still, and he often almost hated his new dignity because he could not share his honours with her; and felt ashamed of his cold and niggard scruples, now that exalted rank and powerful influence made him independent of opinion, and could have made it so easy for him to raise to his own level a creature so virtuous and so elegant as Violet.

But it was too late; and even while the little "Lady" Clarissa hung about him, and the "Honourable" Marmaduke climbed his knee, his thoughts would wander, tinged with regret, and even remorse, after the poor young pilgrim of love and sorrow; and imagination would picture her possible and, alas! probable trials; and he who had once so calmly resigned Violet, and rejected her love, would rush out of his house, and hurry to that wild cliff whence she had all but thrown herself; and, but for the thought of his darlings, he, too, would have been glad to die. What a power over a man of mind and feeling has the memory of any woman who has really loved him!

Symons had contrived to worm his way back into his colonel's favour; and he had on the chivalrous spirit and generous heart of Harcourt Pevensey, Earl of Chester, what the latter felt to be a great claim; for in the passion of the moment, the colonel had insulted one whose position prevented his resenting the affront.

Symons knew his colonel well enough to make a great deal of this. He pretended dejection, misery, contrition; assumed the candour of a man who has nothing more to lose or to gain; he indited a most really artful, but apparently frank confession; he said that love for his colonel was the strongest feeling of his bosom, and the next was his passion for Violet; that he had been very anxious to prevent such a *mésalliance* as a union with Violet would have been for Colonel Pevensey, even before he became Earl of Chester; but that what would have been a disgrace to his colonel would be an honour to him, and that he had intended, could he have excited any interest in her heart, to have made her his wife.

There was much more in this style. The Earl of Chester believed it all, for all noble natures are credulous. He was anxious to atone to Symons for

insult he, as his inferior officer, could not resent. He longed for any one with whom he could talk of Violet; and so Symons, like a snake as he was, crawled and wriggled himself back into his patron's favour and intimacy.

He even offered to go to New York in search of Violet, if the tracing her continued to be as necessary as it then was to his colonel's peace of mind.

CHAPTER LXXIV.]

ROSALIE'S WEDDING.

How great a contrast in all respects were the weddings of Rosalie and Jeannetta! Our readers know how different were the feelings, views, characters, and objects of the young couples; they know that Jeannetta, romantic, impassioned, lofty, and exacting, expected the entire devotion of one who could at once satisfy her ambition, her pride, and her love. Rosalie, on the contrary, sought in her union with Gerard Esdaile, a happy, but not a stately home—an affectionate, but not a rapturous attachment—an elegant competence, not a noble fortune—the title of a good man's wife, not that of a great man's countess. Foreign splendour, far away from all dear to her, would not have satisfied Rosalie's truly domestic and affectionate heart; but in point of love, real, unworldly woman-love, Rosalie did not yield the palm to Jeannetta: she was, it is true, the second love of Gerard's heart, but he was the first, the only one of hers.

And, indeed, as he every day grew more tenderly attached to her, and as the quiet beauties of her temper and disposition unfolded, he began to doubt whether his wild adoration of Jeannetta had not been a delusion of his fancy—a passion of the brain rather than the heart—so unlike was it in its almost painful ecstasy to the quiet and intense happiness of his love for Rosalie.

Rosalie's nuptials were celebrated at Fairfield Hall, the home of her laughing childhood and her happy youth.

It was the evening before the wedding, and by that very hearth where they had played in infancy, the lovers sat; a bright autumnal day had ended in a chilly evening, and a noble fire of fragrant pine wood from the groves of the estate blazed joyfully.

The party consisted of the lovers, of good old Dr. Esdaile, Mrs. Orde, Miss Jenny, Violet, two Misses Vernon (pretty, lively girls from a neighbouring country seat, who were, with Violet, to officiate as bridesmaids), and young Squire Moody (once Rosalie's hopeless adorer), with two college friends of Gerard's, namely, Ernest Hamilton and Roger Latour, to act as bridesmen and *beaux* for the young ladies.

A good deal of merriment was going on, in which all the young people, except Violet and the lovers, heartily joined. Disappointed love still cast its dark shadow over Violet's young spirit, and the very happiness of the love of Gerard and Rosalie had in its intensity a touch of sadness. Mrs. Orde's mind was wandering from the calm, clear prospects of her Rosalie to the more doubtful destiny of her darling Jeannetta, but she had that very morning received Jeannetta's long letter, in which, though she announced that she had been ill, and excused herself and the count from attending Rosalie's wedding, she made no allusion to her sorrows, but spoke in the tenderest terms of her husband. Still it did not escape Mrs. Orde's maternal anxiety that Jeannetta indulged this time in no rapturous descriptions of her exquisite happiness; and the mother began to fear that the daughter was waking from her wild dream of bliss to the cold realities of life.

Miss Jenny was not in a very good humour; she had to the last indulged a hope that her especial favourite, *protégée*, and *élève*, Rosalie, would follow her example, despise mankind, and choose a single life.

The Misses Vernon and Gerard's college friends amused themselves with burning nuts, telling ghost-stories, singing, and playing little *jeux de société*, in which they insisted on enlisting the lovers, Mrs. Orde, Miss Jenny, Violet, Squire Moody, and the Oxonians.

All who in these games had incurred forfeits found themselves called upon to sing songs. Miss Jenny was

the first on the list ; and sitting down in state before Rosalie's piano, began, in a shrill, squeaky voice, a song entitled, "Welcome, sweet Celeebacy," which, as it was her own composition, and an exposition of her peculiar opinions, elicited a great deal more of laughter than of applause.

Rosalie's turn came next. Rosalie was a sweet ballad singer ; her voice was clear and silvery, her taste and ear cultivated and fine ; and she had the rare art of making every word audible. Without moving from her low chair by Gerard's side, she took up her guitar, and began, with downcast eyes, many blushes, and some tears—

"Why seek to hide my heart's emotion,
Loved one, from thee—loved one, from thee?
Thou who dost know my soul's devotion,
Loved one, to thee—loved one to thee!

"The falt'ring tongue, the bosom swelling,
This hand less worthy thine would be,
Could they conceal the love that's dwelling
In this fond heart—for thee—for thee!

"The past has nought I would should perish ;
The soul of truth art thou to me ;
Nor mingles with the love I cherish
One doubt of thee—one doubt of thee!"

Every eye except Miss Jenny's sparkled through tears as Rosalie's voice died away ; and Gerard, being called upon next, in a fine voice well cultivated, began, holding Rosalie's hand the while, and in spite of his manly nature growing pale as he proceeded with "The Angel of Life :"—

"Angel of life ! in thine innocent beauty,
Thine exquisite tenderness, pride of the heart
Of him who will make it his holiest duty
To solace and cheer thee—all good as thou art !

"Each day and each hour of sunshine together
Shall bind me more closely, beloved, to thee !
And oh, in the gloom of life's stormiest weather,
My bosom, beloved, thy shelter shall be !"

The evening came to a close with an elegant and sociable *petit souper*. The affianced lovers parted for the

last time; and ere long all slept in that happy home, save perhaps the bride and bridegroom elect, who somehow or other scarcely ever do close their eyes, at least if they are to be believed, the night before the day of their destiny.

A bright and glorious sun got up betimes, and arrayed himself in all his splendour to do due honour to Rosalie's nuptials.

So much were the bride and bridegroom respected in the village, that their wedding-day was a general festival and holiday. There was not a young girl in the place, whether one of Rosalie's school or not, who did not array herself either in white or in her smartest, lightest dress, put on all her little store of ornaments, and join the procession, formed of young lads and lasses, who, from baskets on their arms, strewed flowers and evergreens from the hall to the church. The road between them was an avenue of noble lime trees, and a broad walk of velvet sod.

As the weather was so exquisite, and the grass quite dry, it was decided that the bridal party should (in the good old English style) walk to church.

Rosalie, who in all things showed the most perfect taste and sense of the fitness of things, did not consider a white satin, or a white lace ball-dress, a suitable costume for the village wedding of a curate's bride; for Gerard had taken holy orders, and though Dr. Esdaille intended to present him in due time to the Rectory of Fairfield, and remove to another living of his own, some five miles off, yet for the first year of his ministry, Gerard was of course obliged to be a curate, and preferred being his father's curate to any other. Rosalie then had on the very prettiest of worked muslins—the pattern consisting of orange flowers, evergreens, and immortelles; it came modestly up to Rosalie's pretty white throat, and was an exquisite specimen of taste and of art.

Rosalie's golden hair was braided on this occasion à la *Madonna*, and an orange wreath surrounded her pretty head, while over all, a Brussels veil of rare beauty, sent by the count and Jeannetta, distinguished the bride, and partly concealed her happy blushes and her happy tears.

Old Dr. Esdaile united the pair, and after a *déjeuner*, at which presided real happiness and heartfelt gratitude to God, the bride rose to change her dress, and ere long, in an elegant chariot (Dr. Esdaile's present), drawn by four bays, and with postilions in blue satin jackets, she was on her way with her heart's chosen to the north of Wales.

Tents had been pitched in the park of Fairfield for a substantial collation, given to all who chose to partake, and rustic sports and a village dance invited abroad all the bridal party from the hall.

Just before dinner, while arm-in-arm with Dr. Esdaile, Mrs. Orde was watching the dance and rejoicing in the unclouded prospects of the young pair, she was summoned home, by the news of the arrival of Lady Beauchamp Crèveccœur, and, untaught by adversity, unchastened by experience, and unchanged in aught but person—gaily dressed in Jeannetta's contributions, and full as ever of affectation, boast, envy, and spite, the sister-in-law came to take up her abode at Fairfield, and make herself as comfortable, and every one else as uncomfortable, as possible.

CHAPTER LXXV.

MISFORTUNES LOVE A CROWD.

POOR Mrs. Orde, robbed of the charming society of both her daughters, was not at all reconciled to her loss by the arrival of the substitute malicious fate had provided her with in her exacting, malevolent, and thankless sister-in-law. She would gladly have kept Violet Woodville with her, but Violet found a life of inaction intolerable in the dejected state of her feelings. Active employment of the mind is the only real solace for the sorrows of the heart; she had, besides, a great and virtuous object in view—to raise from indigence, and restore to comfort, if not to affluence, those who had been as the tenderest parents to her—to enable them to provide a substitute for Valentine, and procure him some employment better

suit to his tastes and feelings. His gloomy brother Hubert, too, whom Violet had not seen when she visited the old manor-house, was fast becoming confirmed in fits of melancholia, and might ere long, it was feared, require to be removed to some retreat for the insane. All these trials of those so very dear to her, and trials which nothing but money could alleviate, made Violet resolve to rouse her slumbering energies, her latent genius, and, by the exercise of her enchanting talents, secure the first place in her profession, with all the fame and emolument that attend a brilliant success.

A few days after Violet's departure to join Mr. Merryweather in Edinburgh, Mrs. Orde was, with an absent mind, gazing at the newspaper to secure her from the disagreeable conversation of her sister-in-law, and her eye had wandered over two or three pages of it, when a paragraph containing two well-known names arrested her attention, a shriek escaped her, and the colour forsook her lips, but yet she spoke not; with eager curiosity Lady Beauchamp Crèveccœur, convinced that her sister-in-law's silence denoted that she had read something which it wounded her own feelings to repeat, rushed to her side and examined the paper. Mrs. Orde's silence was explained otherwise than her sister-in-law expected, for, following the direction of her bewildered gaze, she saw—

“ Arrest on a Charge of Murder of Two Foreigners, calling themselves the Baron de Saint Felix, and the Capitaine Crèveccœur.”

The paragraph ran thus:—

“ The above-named foreigners, two men of dashing appearance, well known in the world of fashion, and both having availed themselves of a season in London, and of the credulity of John Bull, to marry English ladies of family and fortune, were yesterday apprehended at the ‘ Star and Garter,’ Richmond, by police constables Badger, Wolfe, and Fox, on charge of the awful murder of an old miser of the name of Grimshaw last winter at Brighton. It appears that the deceased, a man of most eccentric and penurious habits, and whose tragic fate, attributed to suicide, must be fresh in the memory of many of our readers, had made a will, and had confided

this will to a merchant, who, having only recently returned from the West Indies, had not heard of the tragic death of the miser. In this will he mentions a large sum of money not found with other moneys in the examination of his room which took place after his death. The numbers of the notes were carefully specified: some of these notes have been traced, with the most active and curious minuteness, to the *soi-disant* Captain Crèveœur and to the Baron de Saint Felix; several of them are stained with blood, and some are torn in two, as if in a struggle. The prisoners, who were taken into custody separately, and so that they could have no communication with each other, gave the most contradictory and dam-natory replies to the cross-examination to which they were subjected. The captain seemed disposed to play the bully, and threatened the police, and even the magistrate, with the vengeance of France for this attack on the honour of one of the most brave and heroic of her sons. The little baron cried bitterly, and at last offered to turn King's evidence; this, if he had no actual hand in the murder, he will perhaps be permitted to do, and be transported for life.

"There are some very curious stories afloat about these showy and desperate villains, and a third, who has had the wisdom to fly from the land of justice and of the best police in the world; but we forbear to say anything in the present stage of the affair at all likely to influence public opinion against the prisoners."

Poor Mrs. Orde, when she had completed this dreadful statement, and when she recollected who that third was thus pointedly alluded to, fell back in her chair and fainted away.

Miss Jenny hastened to her assistance, peremptorily insisting on Lady Beauchamp Crèveœur's telling her what it all meant.

"Why, Crèveœur and the baron are accused of the murder of old Grimshaw, the miser, at Brighton. It's traced pretty clearly home to them, and the baron has offered to turn King's evidence if his life is saved!"

"The peetiful cooard! Indeed, Leddy Beauchamp, tho' it makes my bluid run cold, to think ye've morried an a butcher, yet, villain and murderer as he is, I

hate the little treacherous viper of a baron ten times mair! Eh, sirs! to think sic' an a gong o' murderers and swindlers ha' hod the rin o' a hame in which dwell the last descendants of the hoose o' Macpherson! But this is na time for greeting; help me bring bock to life yon puir mither, wha's daughter is noo in the pooer of ane of this vary gong, or I'm much mistaken. Here, while I hauld her, do you ca' her maid—you can ca' if you canna' do onything else!" she muttered as Lady Beauchamp Crèveœur left the room exclaiming:—

"Surely, if they are a gang of felons, it's I am to be pitied—I, who am the wife of the very ringleader of the gang! What is it to be a mother-in-law of one of them compared to being the wife, the robbed, the ruined, the outraged wife!"

Mrs. Orde recovered from insensibility to the most torturing terrors about her beloved Jeannetta. She had no one to condole with, no one to comfort her but the old man-hater; for Lady Beauchamp could feel for no one but herself, and even betrayed every now and then a latent hope that it might be all true, and that Crèveœur might, if not for the murder, at least for his villany to her, be hanged, if she could in any way recover the property which he had seized, or even secure the small remnant of it to herself.

In conning over the dreadful account of the capture of her son-in-law's intimate associates, another distressing paragraph met Mrs. Orde's eye, and made Miss Jenny exclaim: "It never rains, but it pours! And misfortunes do indeed love a crowd——"

This paragraph was headed:—

"Sentence of the court-martial on Private Valentine Woodville, of the —— Regiment of Dragoons."

The sentence was—"That private Valentine Woodville, having been found guilty of striking his superior officers, Captain Symons and Sergeant Sharpe, was sentenced to be shot; but that, on account of the youth of the culprit, and the provocation which it appeared he had received, the sentence was commuted to THREE HUNDRED LASHES!"

That very evening's post brought Mrs. Orde a letter from a Brighton friend, and among other chit-chat, were

the details of this horrible affair, at that time the topic of general conversation.

Dreadfully as Mrs. Orde was engrossed by her own misery, she could not read, without horror and anguish, the sickening result of the malicious and heartless enmity and vengeance which had long been working in the mean breasts of Captain Symons and of Sergeant Sharpe, against the unhappy, and almost heart-broken young private.

This garbled account, a repetition of one set afloat by Symons, stated, that "Valentine Woodville, always remarkable for insubordination, ill-conduct, and bad temper, had, on occasion of some joke addressed to him by the sergeant, about some sweetheart who had jilted him (Valentine Woodville), and whom the sergeant avowed to be no better than she should be, quoting, as his authority, Captain Symons of the same regiment, had suddenly and fiercely rushed upon his sergeant, struck him in the face, and knocked him down; that Sergeant Sharpe, stunned by the violence of the blow, could not rise; and that two privates present, trying to seize the infuriated young man, who seemed to be endowed with a giant's strength, were flung to the ground; that Captain Symons approaching at this very moment, Private Woodville rushed at him, struck him in the face with a blow that knocked out the captain's front teeth, and, seizing his officer's cane with one hand and his collar with the other, struck him fiercely and repeatedly until the captain's cries for help brought up the sergeant (still bleeding at the nose and mouth) and several other soldiers. The young desperado was by numbers finally overpowered; but not without much difficulty, nor without his captors being very much knocked about." The writer added: "Captain Symons, who is a very slight, small, and somewhat delicate man, of (we hear) *most amiable disposition, gentle temper, and much beloved in the regiment*, has sustained several severe injuries; one of his eyes is much impaired, if not destroyed, by a brutal cut with his own cane; his front teeth are knocked out, and his body is severely bruised and lacerated.

"As he and Sergeant Sharpe have always been remarkable for their kindness and affability to this monster

in human shape, there is nothing to account for the outrage but the desperate and abandoned character of Private Woodville. Indeed, he seems to be in himself a living contradiction of the poet's generous assertion, 'that none are all evil.' It is said, that great interest was used in the regiment by a certain exalted personage to get the sentence commuted.

"It appears that the fair one, whose beauty was the real cause of this sad business, is no other than the celebrated actress, Violante Woodhurst, or rather Woodville, since it appears that she is first cousin to the young private, Valentine Woodville, now under sentence, and that love for her caused him to quarrel with his family and enlist.

"There are rumours afloat that this enchantress, who, after working all this mischief, is still 'fancy free,' and resolved on a single life, actually refused an offer of marriage from (but this is quite *entre nous*) the haughty, exclusive, inaccessible Colonel Pevensey (now Earl of Chester), and also rejected his friend and late *aide-de-camp*, Captain Symons. Absurd as it seems, this report has gained ground—and I understand that there is a strong party in favour of the young private, who it appears is madly in love with the girl, and has narrowly escaped death in his jealous but, some say, just defence of her honour."

"Poor, poor Violet!" sobbed Mrs. Orde, "what anguish this will cause her! Why, the disgrace of having a son publicly flogged will kill the poor old people! And then the interesting, devoted young man himself! Oh, if my own more immediate anguish and terrors about Jeannetta did not engross all my heart, I should fly to dear Violet, and then hasten with her to Brighton to see what can be done in this horrible affair; but even while I think upon one tragedy of life, my own beloved Jeannetta may be taking an active part in another deeper, deeper still!"

So unbearable became Mrs. Orde's uncertainty, and so uncontrollable her terrors, that she suddenly resolved to start for Constance in search of her daughter; and Miss Jenny, who was ever kind in deed, though harsh in word, finding Lady Beauchamp Crèveœur determined to

in her present comfortable quarters, volunteered to accompany the distracted mother, and the very next day they set off together.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

A NIGHT OF SUSPENSE.

VIOLET had formed a most profitable engagement with Mr. Merryweather, now the manager of the Edinburgh Theatre, and had made the most triumphant and brilliant *début* ever remembered on the boards of the modern Athens. The houses were nightly filled to an overflow. The beautiful young actress was the universal theme—her name was on every lip—her image in every heart. She was on the high road to fame and fortune, when one day a newspaper happening to fall into her hands (a rare occurrence, for she had no time to read much, except in her own line), the first name that met her eye was that of Valentine Woodville, and the whole heart-rending details of his examination before the court-martial were conveyed to her startled and horrified mind—her miserable and sensitive heart.

This, then, was Symons's revenge—his revenge on her, and on her wretched cousin.

On her, for her indignant rejection of his advances, her proud proclamation of her devotion to Pevensy, and on him, for the disparaging opinions he had expressed in his letter to Violet, in his conversation with his fellow-soldiers—and the scorn and defiance which the captain read in the young private's face, and which he felt in his base, mean heart he had so well deserved!

"Oh, Valentine! oh, my proud, my noble, my devoted cousin!" sobbed poor Violet, in her anguish, burying her face in her hands and weeping bitterly. "Oh, the tender mercies of these wicked foes! Death to thee would have been nothing in comparison with this! How will thy noble heart burst, how will thy proud spirit burn! Oh, God! they will bind thee! Oh, madness! the lash, the vile lash will cut and lacerate that fair, that tender skin,

in boyhood, in childhood—ah, it seems but yesterday—thy mother's pride! And how, oh, father! can I think of this and know myself the fatal cause and live? But Pevensey will not permit it—he will not let them thus degrade one in whose veins flows the same blood as Violet's—he will not let them strip, and bind, and lacerate the flesh of a Woodville! Has he not told me, he could not look at my poor cousin without emotion, because he resembled me! I will write to him—implore him—nay, more, I will go to him—kneel—supplicate him. Oh, God! it may yet be time!"

Violet seized her pen and wrote,—

"HARCOURT,—If you ever loved me, have mercy on my cousin—he is not guilty, at least not of anything that your generous and noble heart would not forgive. If this cruel, this degrading sentence is carried out, oh, Harcourt! you will kill his poor, proud parents; he himself will die broken-hearted,—and what will be the misery of, dearest and best, your once loved

"VIOLET."

Having despatched this note, blotted with tears, and almost illegible in parts, without giving a thought to her promised appearance at the theatre—an appearance for which all the *élits* of Edinburgh were at that moment eagerly preparing—she hastily put up a few necessities, drove to the station, arrived a minute before an express train started for London; and one hour after perusing the dreadful account of Valentine's trial and sentence, Violet was flying southwards at the rate of fifty miles an hour; and Merryweather the manager, after waiting till he was almost frantic, and the house in an uproar, thought it best to announce that Miss Woodhurst had, on reaching the theatre, fallen down in a fit and been conveyed back to her own abode, where she was attended by several medical men, who pronounced her dangerously ill—but gave hopes, with care and quiet, of a rapid recovery. Another piece was hastily substituted, and money returned if required. But Violet, in the engrossing anguish of her heart, forgot Merryweather—forgot even that she was an actress. Her heart was with ^{the} poor old squire who had been a father to her—wi^t

fond mother, the kind, the good, the motherly old lady—with poor, poor Valentine, her early friend, her playmate, the bold, frank, generous boy! the little lover of her childhood! the, alas! too devoted adorer of her hapless youth!

Rapidly as she travelled, to her excited and anxious mind the journey was tedious and protracted to an unbearable degree; her sighs, her unconscious groans, her movements of impatience at every delay, and her repeated bursts of uncontrollable emotion, as the horrible picture of Valentine's brutal and degrading punishment and its probable results would force themselves on her mind, made her fellow-travellers fear she was not quite in her right mind; and they whispered and watched her, and huddled together—but she heeded them not. The necessary delays (few as they were) almost compelled her to rush out, with the feeling all have known in such cases of dreadful suspense, that their own wretched and exhausted powers could bear them along more swiftly than even the elements.

Poor Violet! she lived in an age of agony in that long night, during which not one moment's sleep visited her burning eye-balls. At length Violet saw the gray dawn, and knew that she was within twenty miles of Brighton; and then, for the first time, thoughts of herself, of how she should meet Colonel Pevensey, of maiden shame and maiden dignity, and an awful doubt of her power to save, and a sickening inability for her task, overcame her, and at this moment a slight shock was felt—a great bustle and commotion ensued—people hurried to and fro—guards flashed green and red lanterns in the scared eyes of the passengers, and Violet heard with horror that a slight accident had happened to the engine, which would detain them a *few* hours.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE SENTENCE OF THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THE morning came, the dreadful morning appointed for the execution of the sentence of the court-martial on Valentine Woodville. He did not believe to the very last that that sentence would be carried into effect; he could not realize to himself a degradation so entire and so appalling. He had written a letter to his colonel, and had, as he thought, won over one of his gaolers to deliver it; but the mean traitor was a creature of Captain Symons's, and that villain contrived that the letter should be delayed till after the execution of the sentence. Poor Valentine, who had claimed the right to be shot, according to the original sentence passed upon him, and had urged his claim in language which he felt his colonel could not disregard, hoped, believed to the last that he was led out to die. Alas! alas!

Over the sickening, harrowing, heart-rending horrors of that dreadful day, we must draw a veil. Harcourt Pevensey, Earl of Chester, colonel of the regiment, to whom false reports of the prisoner's language, conduct, and feelings had been constantly and industriously conveyed, and who, as we have stated before, was a rigid disciplinarian—by some called a martinet—and on principle, mistaken but sincere, an upholder of that dreadful and brutalising punishment now, thanks to the "spirit of the times," almost abolished, could not see the wasted but still beautiful form of Valentine Woodville, bared and bound for the most ignominious and horrible of punishments, without a shuddering horror and a sense of faintness which it required all his military self-command and thorough-bred nerve to conquer. As it was, the blood completely forsook his lips and cheeks, and Symons dreaded lest the colonel might actually fall insensible on the ground and the brutal punishment be delayed.

For one moment their eyes had met—the eyes of the colonel and the private. Till Valentine met Lord Chester's gaze, those beautiful eyes, full of the long ago, and of anguish unspeakable, reminded Lord Chester of

Violet's in their heart-rending desolation; but just as they met his colonel's, an almost wolfish fire of revenge, of hatred and defiance flashed from them—a slow shade of deepest crimson stole over the marble beauty of his features, and his countenance settled into an expression of contempt and scorn almost sublime—for Symons, pale and trembling, met his view!

Slowly once, when he was bound, and his arms, raised above his head, were fastened to the ladder, and on that soft and alabaster skin the lacerating cat was about to descend, he turned his head and gave his colonel one look, the intense reproach of which haunted that colonel to his bed of death.

* * * * *

During the execution of the sentence several of the men were carried out fainting. Valentine did not expire under the lash; he was borne to the hospital; his wounds, as usual, were bathed in vinegar—vinegar and gall! They played their part in a much holier tragedy—why not here?

It was remarked among the men, that never had such heroism been exhibited—from a young fellow delicate as a girl, wasted with illness, the extreme of torture had not extracted one shriek, one groan.

"I gave him a bullet to put between his teeth," said Jones, who had once before evinced some human feeling, "and I picked it up afterwards quite flat—Look, here it is!"

"Well, Captain Symons and Sergeant Sharpe hadn't the triumph of making him halloo or groan," said another. "He's game indeed!"

"They say he'll die," said a third.

"If he does, I hope there'll be work for Jack Ketch yet," said Jones.

"Amen!" cried several.

The tables were turned. Now, the scourged, lacerated, hated private was become a popular man.

Sick at heart, and himself thoroughly disgusted with the system which he had hitherto conscientiously upheld, the Earl of Chester returned, after the dreadful execution of the sentence, to his own house. He found a small crowd assembled there, and making his way to the door—

steps, he saw the lifeless body of a travel-stained, silver-haired, but aristocratic-looking old man, supported by one of his own footmen, and the figure of a tall, elderly woman, quaintly attired in a bye-gone fashion, kneeling over the corpse and wringing her hands in hysterical and intolerable anguish.

"The father and mother of Private Valentine Woodville, my lord," whispered the earl's confidential man; "they've travelled on foot almost all the way from near Derby to beg him off, and when the old gentleman heard he was too late and it was all over, he dropped as if he'd been shot, and the doctor there says life's extinct, my lord."

The earl had the body of the poor old "mad squire" conveyed into the house. It was decently interred at his expense; the old lady had one interview with her wretched son in the hospital, and prepared to return home. She accepted, apparently unaware of any obligation, money for her journey from the earl and all offers of assistance. Her intellect, once so clear, seemed quite clouded. Before setting out, in charge of a nurse provided by Lord Chester, she went to see her husband's grave: at the sight, her melancholy changed into frenzy—she lingered about ten days, and was buried by that husband's side.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE DAY AFTER.

HARCOURT PEVENSEY, now Earl of Chester, was pacing up and down his room a prey to conflicting emotions. He had just received Violet's blotted and half-distracted letter, and one which Valentine Woodville, from his prison, when he was awaiting his dreadful punishment, had addressed to him—a harrowing letter indeed it was:—

"MY LORD,—It is not meanly to avoid punishment for an offence I would repeat to-morrow under similar circumstances that I venture to address you; it is

to implore mercy in the common acceptation of the term; but to intreat you, by every gentle and human feeling in your breast, by every sympathy one man of honour has with another, every kindred feeling that throbs in the breasts of the gently born, to do me the *great, great* mercy of suffering the *full* sentence of the court-martial to be executed upon my wretched body, and of saving my spirit the ignominy of a punishment, the degradation of which will be the first blot on a time-honoured and time-hallowed name! Let the sentence of death be carried out, and my last words shall be a blessing on your name. Yes, your name shall supplant on my dying lips that I have worshipped through life, and in defending which, from black and basest calumny, I have fallen into the spider web of iniquity those dastards and base maligners, Captain Symons and Sergeant Sharpe, have long been spreading for me.

"My lord, I am a gentleman—I, the wretched private, under sentence of the lash, I am a gentleman; and I implore you from my knees, which never bent before except to God—I implore you as one gentleman addressing the inmost heart of another, to withdraw the cruel commutation and let me die. So shall you save my soul, for then I shall die in blessed peace with you and all mankind, even the traducers of Violet—so, forgiving all, shall I too be forgiven—so shall not my father's and mother's hearts break as in their solitude they dwell on the deep, deep degradation of their son—so shall Violet remember me, and my great, great love, hopeless and hapless as it was, with soft tears of regret, not with burning blushes of shame! No, no, no! in agony I implore you let it not be—let me die!

"I claim what to me is the *great* benefit of the verdict passed upon me—I reject, I refuse the commutation. Oh, God! I grow wild! Colonel, forgive me! If you have the power, let me die. Realise to yourself my position! Suppose that you, ere your twentieth winter, with a love miserable and mad as mine for one like Violet, had sunk to my present low estate, and all that has befallen me had been your lot! You would have avenged her as I did! I know, *you* know, you would; and you would claim death as the greatest of boons. Oh!

do then to me as you would be done by, so shall the blessing of a dying man be with you and yours. But if you will not save me from disgrace, colonel, may anguish such as I feel now, and such as you will inflict on my poor parents, be yours for ever!

“VALENTINE WOODVILLE.”

Every word of this letter went to Lord Chester's heart. The question was not, whether he could or could not have succeeded in getting the dreadful sentence remitted—whether the extraordinary and unprecedented request of the young private could have been complied with; whether Lord Chester would have taken any steps contrary to the whole tenor of his military principles and practice—what grieved him to the soul was, that he had received this touching letter too late to reply to it at all, to visit the unhappy prisoner, to investigate, to comfort him in any way; he must now for ever appear to him as the most heartless of men, the bitterest of foes! He could now explain but too well the intense and ever-haunting reproach of Valentine's glance, and he felt as if that glance would haunt him for ever. Violet's letter added not a little to the distress this miserable affair caused the Earl of Chester. He was haunted at once by Valentine's look of unutterable reproach, by Violet's touching appeal, and by the memory of the affecting picture of that dead father—that distracted, heart-broken mother.

Even his children had no power to soothe such anguish as this, and he resolved to visit the miserable Valentine in the hospital, and himself ascertain the truth of the reports that death would, ere long, close his tragic career.

He waited till it was dusk to take this step, and throwing his cloak around him, he stole out and came suddenly upon Violet, who, pale and wan, but unaware that it was too late, was hastening to his house. Ah, what a meeting was this!

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE WIFE—THE CONFESSION.

FROM the melancholy meeting of Violet and him she loved, from the death-bed of Valentine, from the grave of his parents, and from the prison where the bold bully, Crèveœur, and the little sprite of evil, Saint Felix, await their trial, let us hasten with Mrs. Orde and Aunt Jenny in search of the young Count and Countess de Montfaucon. Ignorant of all the dark scenes that are passing in the homes of those they love, Rosalie and Gerard are enjoying the most blissful of honeymoons, travelling through the bye-ways, not the highways, of North Wales and of the highlands of Scotland. Sojourning wherever nature is beautiful and gay company does not intrude, since they left Fairfield they have not seen one newspaper, and only had one kind, cheering note from Mrs. Orde; this note was written the day before she heard of the arrest of the baron and Crèveœur, and of the dreadful sentence on poor Valentine Woodville. She had playfully begged the bride and bridegroom to make the most of their time, and enjoy themselves to the full, as she could not spare them long.

It was a great comfort to Mrs. Orde to find by Rosalie's silence and absence that she was in happy ignorance of all that would have made her kind heart wretched, and changed bridal joy into terror and dismay.

Mrs. Orde and Miss Jenny (whose oddities led her into many disasters there is no space nor time to record) arrived at Constance only to find the Montfaucons gone. They traced them through disguises and difficulties which nothing but a mother's energetic and anxious love could have conquered to Bordeaux. They had been (Miss Jenny and Mrs. Orde) some days at Bordeaux, having lost all clue to the retreat of the objects of their search, when one Sunday evening, at the Protestant church, they sat directly behind two young women in the dress of the Bordelaise peasants; and the swan-like throat and exquisite grace of the figure of the one, and the fair skin and flaxen tresses of the other, peeping

from under the little madras on her head, arrested their attention.

It struck Mrs. Orde too that a few words they exchanged sounded, in their distant murmur, more like English than French, and at last she felt almost certain that the short and fair-haired one whispered, "Oh, my lady, it is raining!"

With intense anxiety, and a suspicion growing into certainty, Mrs. Orde awaited the end of the service, and then the tall and stately figure rose from her knees in all her recovered bloom and beauty. Though tears were in her eyes, Mrs. Orde recognized her darling Jeannetta, and saw that it was Phœbe by her side.

Jeannetta at the same moment knew her mother and her great aunt, but, with admirable self-possession, she repressed her own surprise and emotion, and (more difficult still) compelled Phœbe to conquer hers. With her finger on her lips, she motioned to her mother to follow her in silence, and she led the way to an obscure inn on the quay.

They went along many passages and up several flights of stairs, and at last they came to two small bricked rooms, but where a bright wood fire, order, neatness, and extreme cleanliness, and cheerful preparations for tea had an air of almost English comfort. Having secured the door and sent Phœbe into the inner room, Jeannetta welcomed her mother and her great aunt with the most heartfelt joy. She briefly explained that the count, her husband, was suspected and accused of a political intrigue in which he had in reality no part. That they had travelled to Bordeaux, in order to escape to New York until the excitement of this political panic had blown over; and the count, having reason to suspect that the police were on his track, they had, at his request, assumed the disguise of Bordelaise peasants!

"My beloved Gonzalve," she added, "is now gone to ascertain at what hour to-morrow we set sail—but why do you weep, mamma dearest? Why do you shake your head so, Aunt Jenny? It is nothing—merely a pleasant trip now."

The mother and the aunt naturally coupled this projected escape of the count's with the horrible and

detected murder of the old miser at Brighton ; but of course they felt how unkind and how unwise it would be to destroy or impair Jeannetta's happy confidence and entire faith in her husband.

"We are not young and buoyant like you, my child," said Mrs. Orde, embracing her, and trying to check her convulsive sobs. "We have had a very long and disastrous journey, my darling, and are fairly worn out in body and mind."

"My dearest mother," said Jeannetta, "I have no doubt you have good reason for what you say. Two English ladies travelling without a gentleman, ignorant of the language, and for the first time abroad—I can well imagine your adventures have been often complicated and distressing."

"I'm na' that ignorant o' the language, niece!" said Miss Jenny. "Classic French I con spake wi' ony mon; but the gibberish o' these wretches is a lingo kenned only by themselfs. But what o' yer ain fate since we parted, niece? I fear me you find wedlock the slavery I told you it war, ond a husband a very tyrant after a'."

"Oh no," said Jeannetta. "Gonzalve is everything I could desire; kinder, fonder, gentler in these troubles, terrors, and difficulties than when we were in possession of every luxury. Now we are all the world to each other, and when this political crisis is past, we shall return from New York and welcome you all in the old castle of the Montfaucons in Touraine, and after a happy summer there, spend the winter in their noble hotel at St. Germain. But now let Phœbe bring in the tea and coffee. What a kind Providence has sent you to gratify my only unsatisfied desire, that of embracing you before we sail, and of hearing of the happiness of Rosalie and Gerard! Come Phœbe," she cried in joyful accents that went to her mother's heart, "bring the tea and coffee, the honey, and the delicious Bordeaux bread and cakes—we have such cream, eggs, and butter! Mamma, Gonzalve goes to market for them himself—he looks so very handsome in his peasant costume—and, oh! he is so kind, so cheerful, and so very grateful to me (and even to Phœbe) for making the best of this political disaster, I never was so happy in my life; and I have good hopes, dearest mamma,

that he may one day become a Protestant. He says my patience and faith in this time of trial is a practical illustration of the merits of Protestantism, worth a thousand homilies."

"Your Aunt Beauchamp gave a very different account, lassie! She described you as a deserted, heart-broken, jealous victim, warse treated than hersel, ond the count a second, ond vary inferior Crèveœur!"

"Ah, I was very ill and silly then, aunt, and expected too much; I thought Gonzalve was always to be a lover, and courtship to last for ever; but I know better now, and begin to find wedlock very enduring, and a good husband a very good thing—but I hear his step—he comes!—he comes!!"

Jeannetta rushed to meet and embrace him, and tell him of the arrival of her mother and great aunt. Whatever he might have felt, he welcomed them with the most cordial delight, warmly embraced Mrs. Orde, and humbly kissed the tips of Miss Jenny's fingers.

As it was a cold autumnal evening, he piled some logs of pine wood on the fire, which blazed and crackled merrily; he drew Jeannetta's tea-table to the hearth, and with much of the devotion and tenderness of yore, he helped her to dispense the tea and coffee.

"Our darling is a little paler than she was, dear mamma," he whispered, and the whisper covered Jeannetta's face and neck with blushes; "but I dare say she has told you the happy cause. The change of scene and air, and the voyage with this prosperous breeze will do her a world of good; and we shall return in time for the heir or heiress of Montfaucon to be born in the castle of the Montfaucons, and the room in which the sons and daughters of our house have always seen the light for the first time for ages past. You will come and preside, dear mamma—Jeannetta, my love!"

But Jeannetta would not hear.

Mrs. Orde tenderly embraced her son-in-law, convinced that he could not smile and talk thus had he had any part in the villainies of Crèveœur and Saint Felix.

The evening repast went merrily on, and all were revelling in the present and forming happy schemes for the future, when a bustle was heard on the stairs; it grew

louder and louder, cries of "*Les gendarmes ! les militaires !*" were heard, oaths of men, screams of women. The count grew deadly pale—Jeannetta, with a wild cry, rushed to his bosom, Phœbe shrieked aloud—Mrs. Orde and Miss Jenny held their breath—the door was burst open—the host and hostess rushed in, followed by the police and the military—the room was full of armed men, and on the landing in the corridor, and on the stairs, were many more.

An officer, who seemed to be in command, stepped forward and said, addressing the count—"You are Gonzalve de Montfaucon!"

"I am!" said the count, gently placing the half-fainting Jeannetta in an arm-chair, drawing himself up, and folding his arms across his breast.

"I arrest you, Gonzalve de Montfaucon, in the king's name!" said the officer.

"Of what am I accused?" haughtily asked the count. The officer drew forth a paper, and read,—

"In the name of Louis Philippe, Roi des Français,—Whereas Gonzalve de Montfaucon, once Count Gonzalve de Montfaucon, was in the year 1839 found guilty of the murder of a young girl, once his intended, and her paramour in a fit of jealousy (and without malice prepense), and was sentenced to the galleys; and whereas Gonzalve de Montfaucon did effect his escape, after five years' imprisonment, in company with two other galley-slaves, Jean Petit, a copying clerk, and Victor Le Bœuf, a master butcher of Lyons, the one calling himself Baron de Saint Felix, and the other Capitaine Crève-cœur, both condemned to the galleys for life for sundry robberies and murders; and whereas, in addition to their former crimes and their escape from just imprisonment, Gonzalve de Montfaucon, Jean Petit, and Victor Le Bœuf are suspected of the foul murder of the Count de Montfaucon, first cousin of Gonzalve de Montfaucon, and who inherited the titles and estates forfeited by his crimes; this is to empower you, Capitaine Latour, to seize, arrest and imprison, in the nearest gaol, one or all of these escaped convicts, Gonzalve de Montfaucon, Jean Petit, and Victor Le Bœuf, there to await their trial."

"That's clear enough," said the officer. "Pardon, mesdames. Soldats, emmenez le prisonnier!"

But as they proceeded to lead away her Gonzalve, bound and guarded, Jeannetta rushed to him, all the wife in her bursting heart, and throwing her arms around him, pinioned and bound as he was, and laying her head on his bosom, she said,—

"Oh, it is not true! Speak, Gonzalve, say it is not true!"

"Jeannetta," said the count, "it is true that in a fit of jealousy, and provoked beyond endurance, I did, when yet a boy in years, slay the false girl whom I had raised from dependence and want to be the affianced partner of my proud fortunes—yes, I, maddened by passion and despair, stabbed her in the very arms of that treacherous rival in the feeble affections of my first love—stabbed with the same weapon him who had been my bosom friend and confidant only to betray and supplant me! It is true, I was condemned to the galleys, and that there I was chained to, became intimate with, and effected my escape through, my fellow-convicts Crève-cœur and Saint Felix, but in their subsequent crimes I have had no share. The murder of my cousin was planned and executed without any sanction of mine! I had friends and adherents who, when aware of my escape, gladly supplied me with the means of existence in more than comfort; but to supply the extravagance and rapacity of my fellow-convicts, Saint Felix and Crève-cœur, was impossible—to shake them off was equally difficult. I did what I could to prevent the crimes they planned, often I succeeded; I joined them in their vile excursion to rob your party on the downs, but only to protect your property and save your lives. With the murder of the old miser I had nothing to do: and with regard to my cousin, in lending myself to his being lured to my house, I certainly intended to terrify him into terms necessary to my position and safety; but to his murder I never would have consented, and heard of it with dismay. I told you, Jeannetta, when first I loved you, which God knows I did with a devotion bordering on insanity, I told you I was the prey of dark passions—that a dreadful mystery was connected with my name; but you loved me and could

not doubt—I adored you and hoped that all might yet be well! For the murder of those traitors to love, to friendship, and to me, I cannot repent, and have far more than atoned; and in this bitter hour, when I stand exposed, disgraced, and ruined, before the angel of my home, the wife of my bosom, all that I really regret, is the ever having said one harsh word to the darling of my heart, or ever yielding to the fancy of a moment, the vanity of man, and the blandishments of a coquette, having caused that true and noble heart one jealous pang! For this, I feel I do deserve to die—far, far more guilty, oh, Jeannetta, than for stabbing to the heart the false and the base, to have sent one poisoned dart through the pure, true heart of my angel wife!”

Jeannetta, as she heard this touching but terrible confession, had slipped from her husband’s bosom to his feet, where a merciful unconsciousness stole over her.

The officer, out of a spirit of French gallantry to the beautiful young wife, and a sort of curiosity, universal in France, about other people’s affairs, particularly those of the English, had allowed the unfortunate count, when safely bound and guarded, to say all he had to say; but finding Jeannetta remained insensible in the arms of her mother and great aunt, he ordered the prisoner to be removed.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

It is wonderful what the human heart, sustained by faith and prayer, can nerve itself to undergo. Jeannetta survived, not only the shock of Gonzalve’s confession, the certainty that he was guilty, and she undone—but his imprisonment, his trial, his condemnation to the guillotine.

But through these regions of despair, the devoted, all-forgiving wife was led by the light of hope—the brightest hope true love can conceive, and which, in its refulgence, almost blinded her to the fact that her Gonzalve’s body must perish—the sublime hope of saving his soul!

Through the kindness of the authorities, she was enabled to be almost constantly with her husband. Her sublime forgiveness, her self-abnegation, her resignation to her own fate, and her entire belief and glorious trust in her Redeemer, began slowly to work the great, great change she had so fervently prayed for in her husband's heart. He listened while she read, and to listen with his intelligence was to be convinced. He believed—he hoped—he prayed! Yes, the proud and scoffing infidel, convinced and humbled, sobbed on her bosom and prayed by her side!

Mrs. Orde and Miss Jenny were kind and attentive; they did not often intrude on the prisoner; they wished him well, they forgave him—but Jeannetta's resignation and sanguine hope was to them a marvel and a mystery. They had removed to the best hotel, and Miss Jenny indulged in more than her wonted tirades against mankind, while Mrs. Orde wept or brooded over the ruin of her hopes, and of her daughter's happiness. At length the awful day approached: Jeannetta was wasted to a shadow, and pale as death but for one bright hectic spot upon her cheek.

On quitting her husband one evening, he told her that the next day he should not be permitted to see her, and Captain Latour confirmed the refusal, saying he had received orders to that effect, as his prisoner had to see several of the authorities, but added she might come as early as she pleased the day after the morrow. As she was leaving her Gonzalve, he called her back, and said,—

“One more embrace, oh my beloved! Let it comfort you to think that you have soothed my sorrows in this world, and that through you, believing in and clinging to my Saviour, we may meet on high!”

He kissed her wildly again and again—for the last time on earth!

The day she might not go to the prison, Jeannetta could not rest. For hours and hours she walked up and down her room, stopping ever and anon to throw herself on her knees and pray; at length she remembered that Gonzalve had expressed a wish to see Jeremy Taylor's “Holy Living and Dying.” She rushed out, determined to try to get it for him. The chief bookseller's shop

on *La grande Place*; Jeannetta did not notice in the intense and passionate absorption of human anguish and heavenly hope that the *grande place* was densely crowded. She made her way to the shop, and the woman (a stranger) catching her by the hand, said, "Venez voir! venez! on voit si bien ici! Venez vite!"

Jeannetta yielded to her compulsion, she scarce knew how or why, but absent in thought suffered herself to be dragged to the window.

Oh God! could ages of happiness efface that moment! Thousands were there assembled—for what? On a raised platform was the instrument of death—several people in black, some apparently monks—one tall noble figure in a white robe. Horror transfixed her to the spot—rigid as marble she stood! He turned his face towards her, a beaming smile parted his white lips, a flood of love and light seemed to irradiate his eyes—he clasped to his bosom a book which she knew was the Bible she had given him. The next moment, quick as a glance of the mind, her straining, burning eyes beheld—his neck bowed, and that noble head, gushing blood, roll back into the sawdust.

With a shriek that startled even the crowd around, Jeannetta fell back. For some time it was believed she was dead. Her mother was sent for, she was removed to the hotel. The terrible shock she had sustained had had a result which all had anticipated and which none could deplore. She was spared having some day to tell her child the tale of sin, of sorrow, and of shame connected with his name. After weeks of delirium she awoke to memory and consciousness, and saw, bending over her couch, the dear faces of Gerard and of Rosalie. By degrees she regained strength enough to travel, and meekly accompanied them to her childhood's home.

CONCLUSION.

VALENTINE WOODVILLE died in consequence of the military flogging he had undergone. It was not so much the effect on his body of the cruel wounds inflicted by the

lash, as that on his already dejected spirit and miserable heart, of the disgrace and the shame he had brought on his ancient name.

Through his long illness he was ever haunted by the thought that Violet, his only love, would despise him, and that he had caused the death of his parents.

He never rallied at all. His colonel, the Earl of Chester, showed him every kindness and every sympathy consistent with their positions. Violet tended him like a sister whenever the regulations of the hospital permitted her visits.

His brother Hubert, silent, gloomy, and morose to all others, but kind and gentle as a loving girl to the dying brother, once his rival, haunted ever, like a spirit of despair, the spot where Valentine lay, and watched his bedside whenever relations were admitted.

He had conceived, with the obstinacy of a morbid mind, a cold and bitter vengeance against his brother's colonel, the Earl of Chester; and to carry out that vengeance he formed a plan so subtle that no one, in the fullest possession of an unimpaired intellect, could have surpassed it in design or execution.

He affected the greatest simplicity, gentleness, and amiability, assumed towards the Earl of Chester a bearing full of gratitude, got admitted to his house, and to intimacy with his children, discovered in what was garnered up his pride, his hope, his love.

For days and days, while Valentine was slowly dying, the madman assumed the gentlest, softest amiability by day, and rushed out at night by the wild sea-shore, to tear his hair, beat his breast, and shriek aloud.

Valentine died.

There was great excitement in Brighton. The colonel, the surgeon, and indeed all the officers present were much blamed; the public insisted on a minute investigation—a coroner's inquest. But beyond general censure nothing could be done in this case, and Valentine was unavenged. Thousands followed him to his early grave, and no heart perhaps mourned him more truly than that of his colonel, the Earl of Chester. Hubert returned from his funeral and went to Violet's lodging; she ill in bed with her uncontrollable grief. She heard

for some time pacing with agitated steps the room beneath, and then he went out, having locked the door and taken the key.

However, there seemed to be a guiding providence at work, for Patience, wanting a kettle which had been left on the hob, opened that door with the key of an adjoining room and entered it.

She found a sealed letter addressed to Violet, which she immediately took to her; Violet read with horror ineffable,—

“VIOLET,—I saw him laid in the grave. The descendant of a line of gentlemen lies in the earth, his noble form mangled with their vile lash. On that grave I swore revenge—the revenge I have been planning since I first saw his lacerated flesh, and heard the moan of his broken spirit and his outraged heart; before you see these lines, Violet—once adored but now despised, for your mad idolatry of the murderer of your cousin, of my poor parents, and the disgrace of our blood—Valentine will be avenged!

“This day that Valentine’s disgraced and mangled body feeds the worms, I am to meet his children—they walk out alone with their attendant! She thinks I love!—love! love! my very soul is full of hate and of revenge! Listen! in that bower on the cliffs, where the cold, proud tyrant wooed you, dying for love of him, I will raise an altar of REVENGE to the memory of my murdered brother, and I will immolate on that altar *what his murderer loves best*. With the same knife will I rid *myself* of the memory of shame—of sorrow—of Valentine—of love—of you!

“HUBERT WOODVILLE.”

Poor Violet had scarcely read the madman’s horrible threat, when she rushed wildly out, followed by Patience, and darting up the deserted street—deserted, for all the world was in the churchyard where Valentine Woodville was buried—she reached, she scarce knew how, the bower in the cliffs. One glance of horror showed her the beautiful little Marmaduke—a corpse—and the savage maniac stealing upon the lovely Clarissa, who, unconscious of what was passing, was gathering wild flowers at a little

distance. Violet rushed in between them, having bade Patience scream aloud for help; the maniac drew near; Violet, one arm round Clarissa, tried with the other to seize the knife—her hand was cut severely, and when he saw her blood, he said almost gently, "I cannot kill you, Violet!" and at the same moment some sailors approaching, urged on by Patience's shrieks and motions, he darted to the bower in the cliffs, raised the bleeding form of the murdered boy, cried aloud, "Tell the cruel Chester, blood for blood! Alas, Valentine is but half avenged!" and sprang with his victim in his arms into the boiling waves beneath!

Long did his father's grief defy all earthly power to comfort or to soothe; but Violet and the child—the sweet meek girl she had with such heroism saved, were blest at last with power to open his sad heart to heavenly solace.

His Clarissa and her unspeakable love were left him still, and to whom did he owe her? To one necessary to her happiness, necessary to his endurance of life.

After a year devoted to grief and his boy, Harcourt Pevensey, Earl of Chester, began to remember not only what he had lost, but what he had left.

* * * * *

Jeannetta, her broken heart bound up by the blessed conviction that her Gonzalve died a penitent and a Christian, led a life of seclusion at Fairfield Hall, devoted to works of piety, faith, and love. Her mother, led by her meek example to look upon this life as a passing scene in which we are to fit ourselves for a better—assisted in every good deed, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, taught the ignorant, reclaimed the wicked, and found, in a truly Christian life, the joys which vanity, ambition, and this world's low pleasures had never yielded her.

The Baron Saint Felix and Crèvecœur were found guilty of the murder of the old miser, condemned, and hanged.

Lady Beauchamp (for she now hastened to drop the Crèvecœur) continued to sponge upon her sister, Mrs Orde:—but then there must be a thorn in every hu side, a bitter drop infused into every human cup.

Miss Jenny had seen nothing in the heroes of our tale to redeem "Odom ond a' his sons fra' the charge o' being a set o' cooard knaves;" and if Gerard, she said, was a bright exception, he "owed it a' to hersel', wha' formed his infant mind on the pottorn o' female excellence."

After hearing Violet's account of Symons's treachery, the Earl of Chester cut him. The example of the colonel was followed by the whole regiment, and of course by all the world. His name is never heard.

* * * * *

It was about two years after Valentine Woodville's death, and the tragedy connected with it—that it was rumoured that Woodburn Castle, after being uninhabited for twenty years, was fitted up to receive the Earl and Countess of Chester and Lady Clarissa Pevensy.

When the noble family were settled there, Gerard and Rosalie called, as a matter of etiquette, on the great man of their parish.

The earl received them with marked cordiality, and rang to beg the countess and Lady Clarissa to come down. The door opened, Rosalie and Gerard rose to make a ceremonious obeisance, but a cry of surprise and joy escaped Rosalie, who opened her arms as Violet, leading the beautiful little Clarissa by the hand, entered and rushed to the embrace of her old friend!

"The Countess of Chester," said the earl, throwing his arm around Violet and Clarissa—"the guardian angel of my life, the wife of my bosom, and the mother of my darling! May I hope, dear Mrs. Esdaile, that her best friends will extend their regard to me and to my child; and that you will honour Lady Chester with the friendship and sweet intimacy with which you once comforted and upheld Violet Woodville."

* * * * *

Our tale is told, for of Rosalie and Gerard it is needless to say that a union such as theirs was productive of all the happiness this world can give. True religion was the basis of the character of both, and on no other basis can domestic happiness be reared.

In time, a rosy wreath of cherub children adorned their earth and gladdened their bowers, and in due time also, their favourite playfellows (a little Harcourt and a Violet

Pevensey) shared their sports, grew in beauty and in grace with them, and became as brothers and sisters in their hearts.

"Rosalie made the only gude motch after a'," would Miss Jenny say—"she morried a mon trained by mysel' on a pottern o' female excellence and virtue."

"Rosalie chose wisely indeed," said Mrs. Orde, "for she chose a good man, a true Christian. Such a man grows every year more tender, more devoted, more fondly attached to his wife; with such a man, and such only, may woman feel sure that the happiness of WEDLOCK will exceed the promise of COURTSHIP."

THE END.

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